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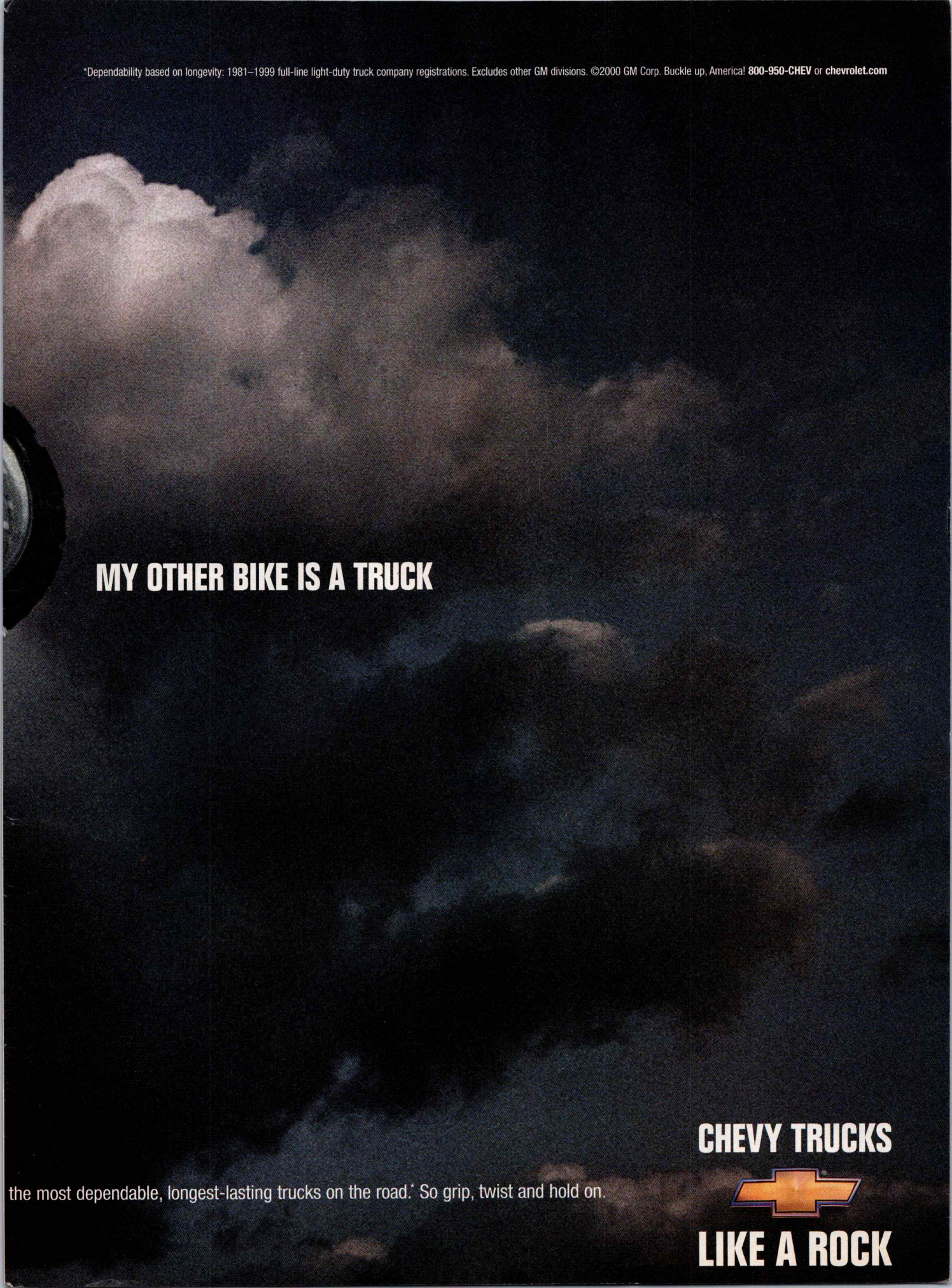
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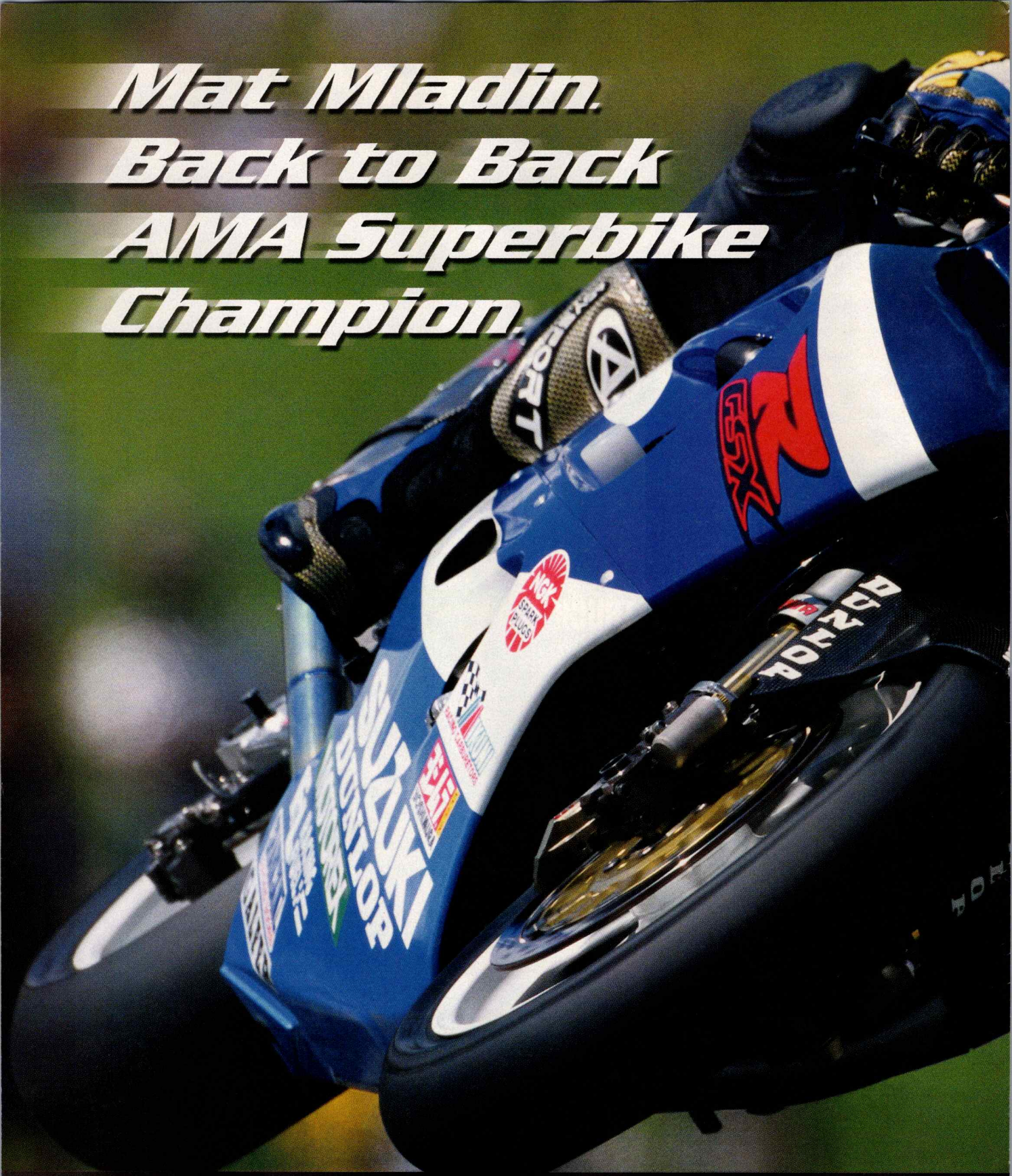

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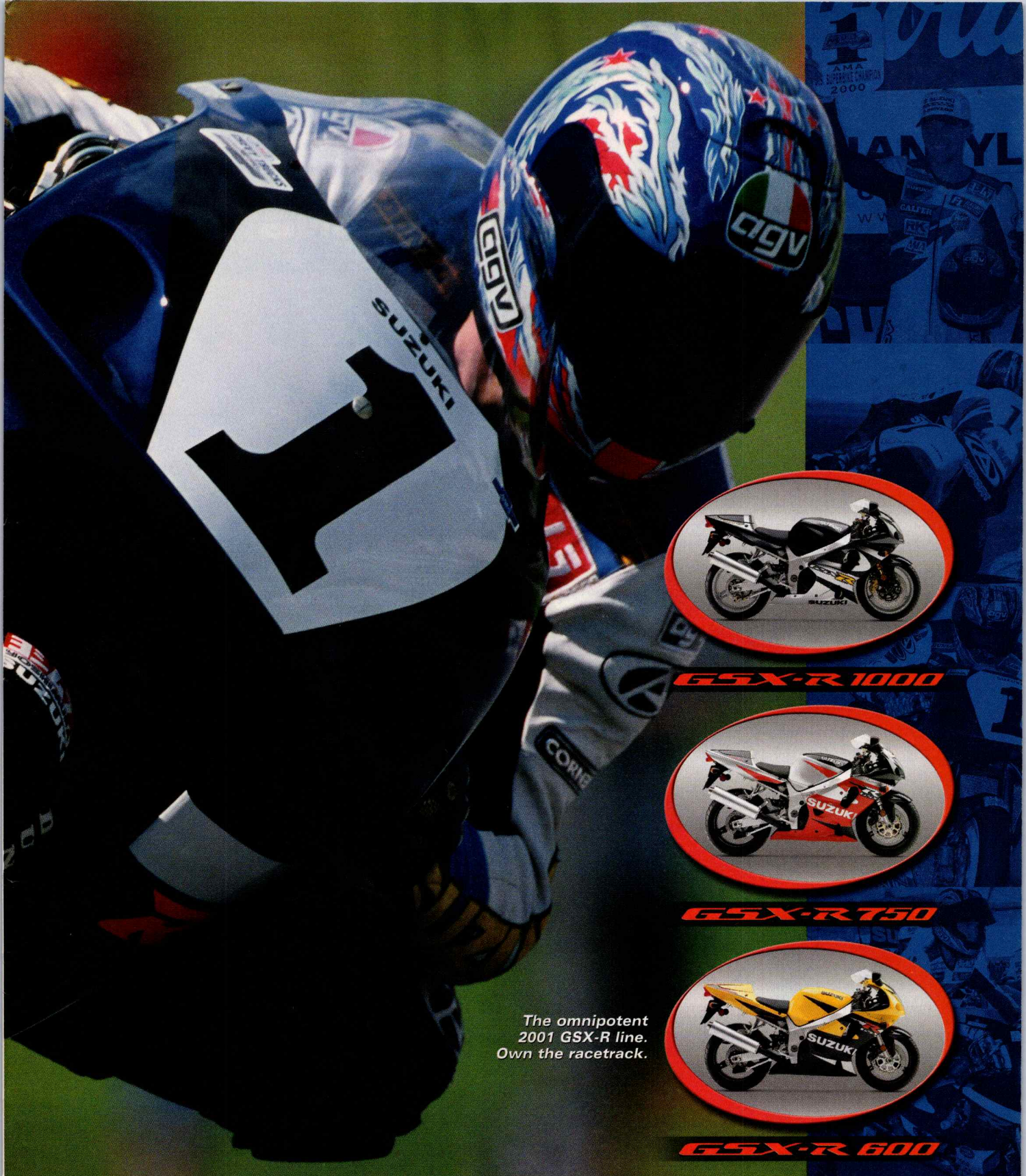

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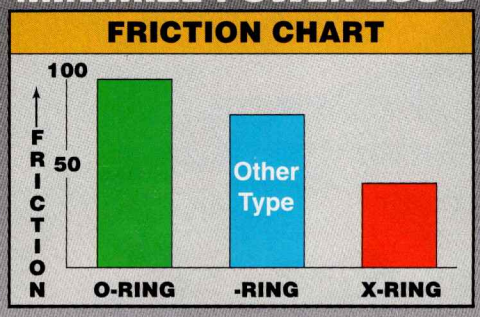

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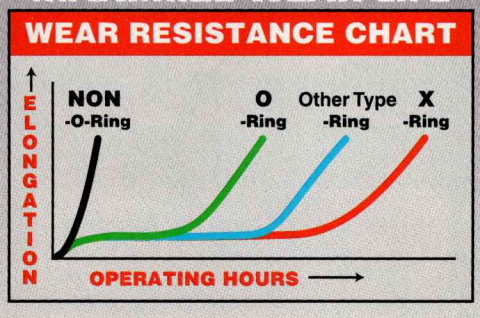

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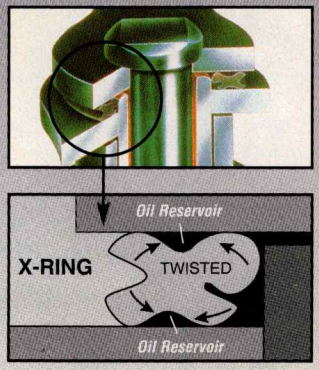

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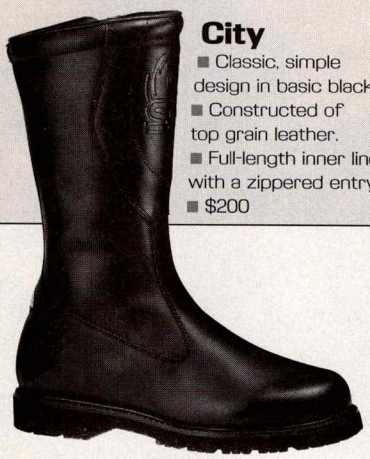

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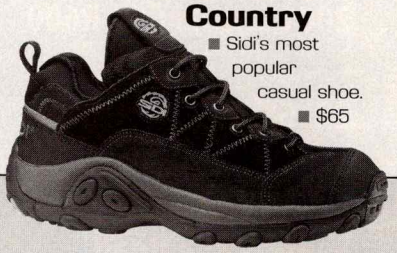

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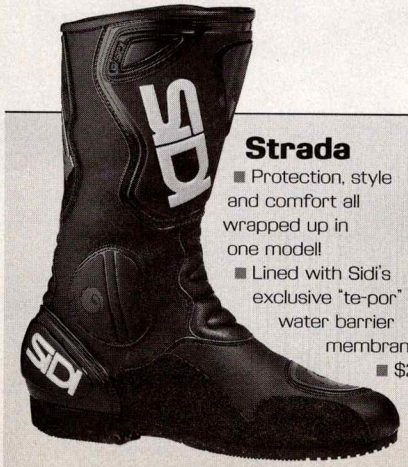

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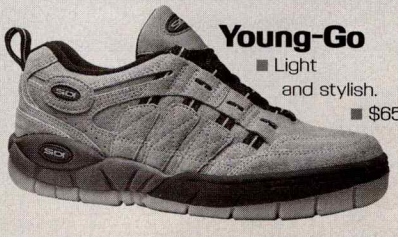

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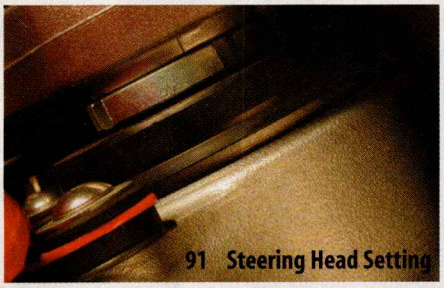

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on the cover

Suzuki's new flamethrower GSX-R600 promises to upset the balance of power in the 600-class this season. John Burns takes a look from the bike's introduction at Road Atlanta.

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The Name Game

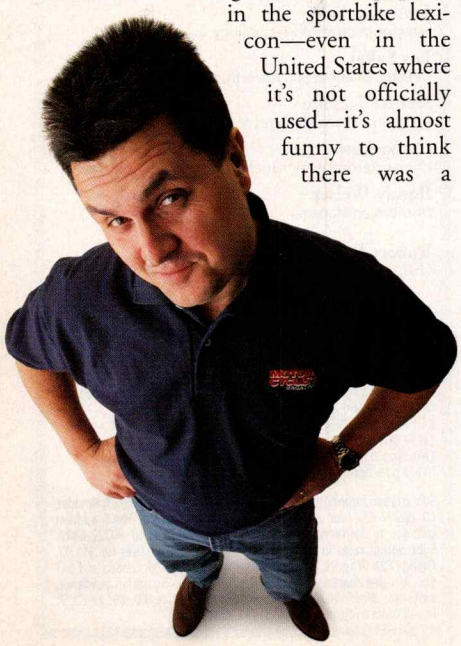
THE MEETING WAS LIKE SO MANY OTHER PRODUCT-planning get-togethers, ones in which a specific detail of a soon-to-debut new model would be determined. I certainly had no idea I'd be recalling the guts of it some 10 years later.

The lone item on the agenda that morning was the proposed name of a new motorcycle that was to be the most important machine of the year for American Honda. Honda Europe, which called many of the product-planning shots for Honda back in the bad old days of the late 1980s and early 1990s (*there's* a story!), wanted to add what's known as a "sales name" to the not-yet-released bike's model designation—sort of like adding "Hurricane" to the original CBR600F.

The product-planning team I was part of didn't like the proposed name much; it seemed foreign to us (it was), sort of forced and comical-sounding (ditto), and didn't roll off the tongue very easily. The opinion was unanimous, too; nobody in the room felt comfortable bestowing such a funky name on such a significant motorcycle. So in the United States the bike would be known only by its alpha-numeric designation.

The bike? The CBR900RR. The name Europe was proposing? Fireblade.

Of course, now that the Fireblade name has become so ingrained and popular in the sportbike lexicon—even in the United States where it's not officially used—it's almost funny to think there was a time when it seemed weird and forced and funky. But there was. And it did.



The reason for these long-buried recollections was the recent name change of Yamaha's all-new FZ1—or Fazer, as it's called in Europe. (We used the Fazer name in an earlier issue so as to not break an agreement with Yamaha regarding its official announcement to dealers that the bike would indeed come to the United States, and as the FZ1.)

Part of the decision to go with FZ1 and not Fazer had to do with the latter's acceptability in Europe vs. the United States.

"Europe already has a 600cc Fazer," Yamaha's Bob Starr told me, "so it makes sense for them to use the Fazer name. American consumers don't really have much of a feel for the name; the 700cc Fazer we imported in the late 1980s didn't last long."

I asked Starr about the FZ1 name specifically, and where it came from. "The bike obviously has a lot of R1 in it," he told me, "and we wanted the bike's name to reflect that; the use of the '1' does that. It also incorporates the 'FZ' prefix, which enjoys a solid sporting reputation here in the U.S."

But will any of this monkeying around with names affect the FZ1's success here in the States? I say no. I can understand Starr's rationale; some of the same thinking caused us to shy away from voting for "Fireblade."

What really matters, of course, is the machine itself—how it looks, feels and performs, its credibility with buyers, etc. I mean, can you imagine the horror of the U.S. Suzuki folks when they learned their new monsterbike would be called the "*Hayabusa*"? I can. Was it a problem? No—the bike kicked butt. Did "Ninja" sound funny way back in 1984? Sure, but the bike backed up the hype with solid performance.

See, hindsight really *is* 20/20.

Ride well.

Mitch Boehm, Editor

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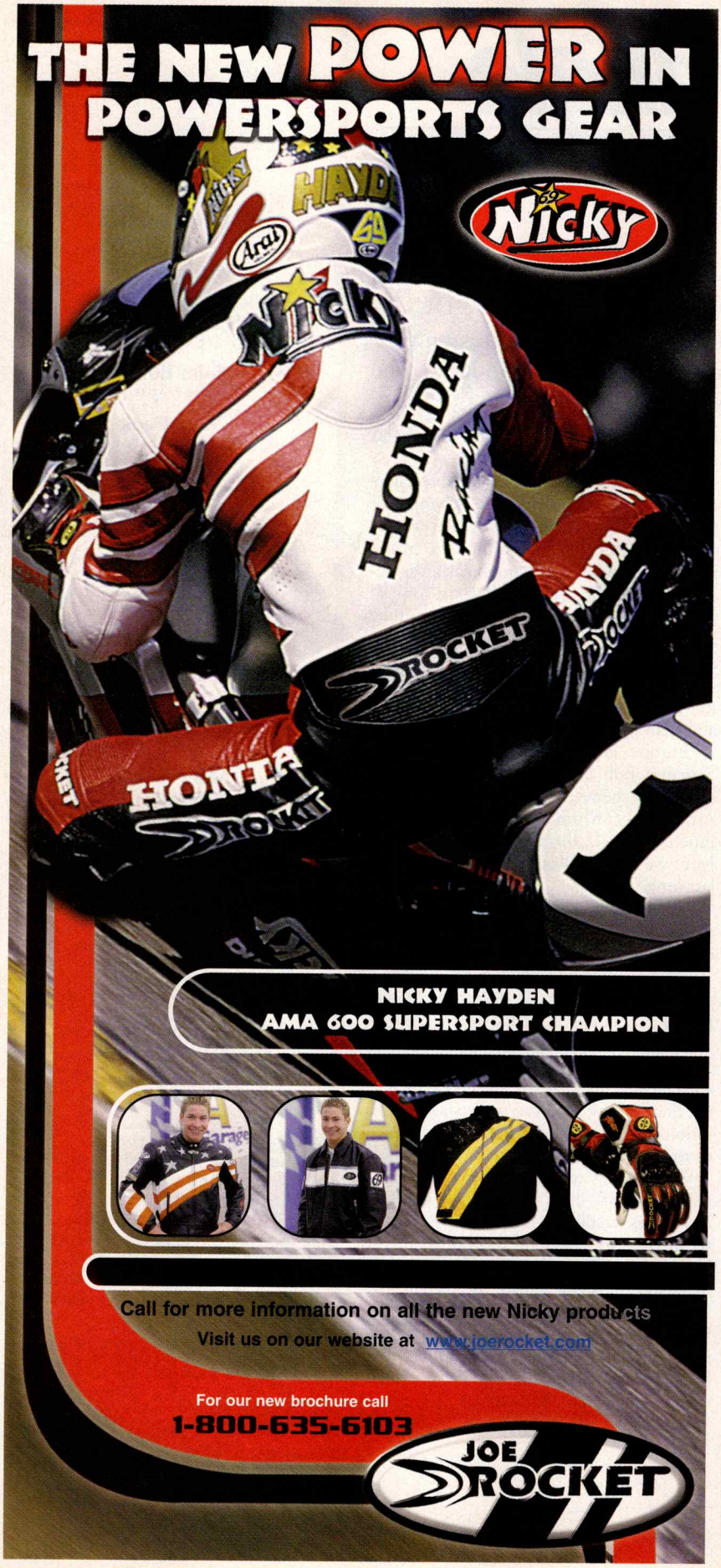

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by Gordon Jennings, *technical editor*

Pig Wobbles

TODAY'S ROADRACING PROFESSIONALS GO INTO A SULK if their bikes don't flop over and commence carving an arc exactly as they require. I understand their complaints, because in the present hypercompetitive racing environment you can't give rivals an edge without being shuffled to the back of the field.

I do wonder, however, what they'd think if they had to ride some of the pigs in action during my racing days. Wobble (not precise steering) was our concern, and we considered the wobble tolerable if it didn't shake our boots off the motorcycle's footpegs, or toss us out of the saddle. Most of the motorcycles of that period wobbled, or in some other manner grossly misbehaved. I will confine my remarks to those I have ridden; those I have grappled with; those that have made me whimper and wonder whether I should cry out for my mother or a priest.

...we considered the wobble tolerable if it didn't shake our boots off the motorcycle's footpegs, or toss us out of the saddle.

Collectors or fanciers of one marque or another will take umbrage at some of the things I may say. I'm sure the shaft-drive, road-legal MV Agusta of the mid 1970s has become a collector's item despite being a real pig, of which it truly could be said, "It wobbles in the catalog." At speeds much above 60 mph, any attempt to corner briskly would be rewarded with disconcerting tremors, which became a sphincter-tightening, convulsive weave at 80 mph and above.

The Vincent HRD Black Shadow I rode at Riverside Raceway circa 1966 had power in full measure, about half enough brakes, and it wobbled all the way around the track. It's possible a new rear damper would have steadied the Vincent a little, but I think it was an irremediable pig—one pretty enough to wear a pearl necklace, but a pig just the same.

Norton's reputation for producing fine-handling motorcycles was not blemished by any of the road tests that appeared after the Commando's introduction. I read those reports but wrote none of them, having broken my body in a racing crash. I eventually did recover enough to ride again, and finally got to ride Norton's Commando, which turned out to be not to my liking.

The Norton wasn't a full-spectrum pig, but its fork was too weak torsionally, which made the bike misbehave massively in fast S-turns. Getting it footpeg-down in the first half of the S gave no hint of the thrills to come when you tried to pull the Norton up and over for the second half. Forcing the bike upright by countersteering would wind up the fork like a torsion bar, which then unwound in oscillations confounding your own steering efforts. The result was an extremely unpleasant weave totally absent from the Norton's steady-state cornering.

Harley-Davidson's old KR could be fitted with a swingarm rear suspension for roadracing instead of the hardtail rear frame section used for dirttrack racing. The hardtail KR's handling was just what you'd expect of a motorcycle refined in a jillion Midwestern half-mile laps. The KR in roadrace trim had outstandingly piggish handling. Not transient misbehavior, like the Norton's, but a vigorous wobble in fast turns that made me clamp my knees against the tank and pray.

The Cotton "Starmaker" sent to me by the late Henry Koepke was, in original form, the worst of the pigs I rode. The Starmaker basically was a scrambles bike with a fairing, like the Greeves Silverstone but less successful. At the time, my roadracing experience was scanty and I thought the Starmaker's dreadful wobble might be caused by something I was doing. So I asked my mentor, Ivan Wager (who had raced for money in Europe and won a bronze replica trophy in the Isle of Man TT races), to take some practice laps on the bike and give me his opinion of its handling. Wager did a single lap before rolling slowly into the pits, lips tight, with the expression of a man who had just encountered a cobra in his tool chest. When he finally found his voice he had nothing good, nothing printable, to say about the bike.

After many hours of head scratching, I narrowed my focus to the Starmaker's leading-link Armstrong fork. I made two layout drawings representing full extension and full compression, and found that the steering geometry's trail varied almost two inches. Further study revealed that the changes in trail steered the front wheel into a self-amplifying wobble. I replaced the leading-link Armstrong with a 305 Honda's telescopic fork and the Starmaker's wobble was gone.

This decade's sport motorcycles, with their immensely rigid frames and refined suspensions, will not introduce you to the pulse-quickening effects of high-speed wobble. Take it from one with too much exposure to the phenomenon: You aren't missing anything a rider needs.

Gordon Jennings

I invite readers' comments, suggestions and even criticisms. My e-mail address is gj@wheelbase.com; call me at (805) 239-2192, 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. PST, or fax (805) 239-0855.

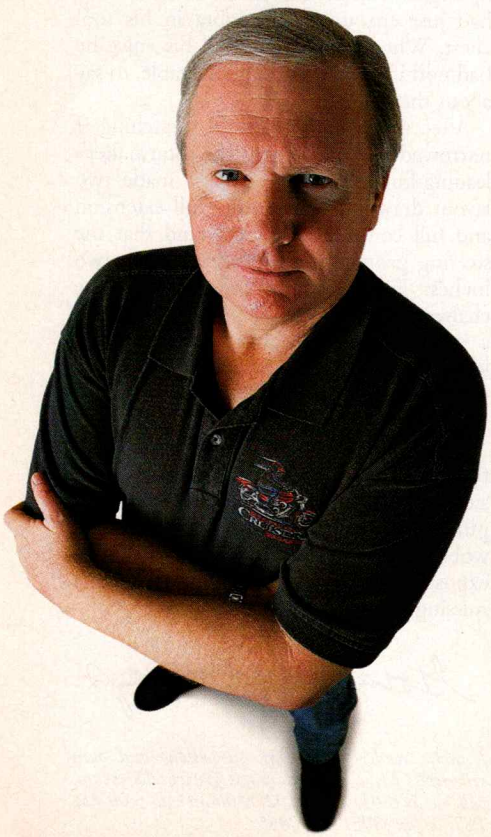
megaphone

by Art Friedman

Bike Bigotry

THE SEGMENTATION THE STREETBIKE MARKET HAS undergone during the past two decades has created some wonderful motorcycles. These days you can satisfy your long-haul wanderlust with a Gold Wing, imitate Kenny Roberts (Jr. or Sr., depending on your generation) aboard a GSX-R750, play urban bad-boy on a Deuce, explore every kinky U.S. road from the saddle of an ST1100 or every fireroad and trail with a KLR650, or simply have huge fun ripping through traffic from the saddle of an EX500. No matter what the job or fantasy, there's a streetbike than can deliver the goods in style.

But segmenting the market also seems to have segmented motorcyclists. Back in the mid 1960s, when I was living large on a Honda CB160, I could count on a wave or nod when I passed almost any other motorcyclist. Brit-bike riders may have muttered "hawg" when they saw a Harley coming (and this was back before Harley decided that pig names were cute), and the Hydra Glide owner might have regarded the Thunderbolt (back then a BSA) as a Limey pipsqueak, but they waved when they passed each other on the road, pulled over to offer aid when they saw one another stopped roadside, and struck up friendly conversation at the gas station or drive-in. Riders didn't always understand each other's choice of bike, but they understood that the differences were mostly cosmetic, and that they shared a common experience and attitude.



...segmenting the market also seems to have segmented motorcyclists.

But as the market divided into more specialized segments, people seem to have narrowed their concept of community. I ride different bikes all the time and am amazed at how differently I am regarded when I swap saddles.

The reasons for this divide range from antagonism to disinterest. "Those sportbike guys try to race on the street, get themselves killed and give all of us a bad name." (This may be the pot calling the kettle cookware, it turns out.) "Those cruiser guys with their loud pipes got my favorite restaurant put off-limits to motorcyclists." (And there were never any nonstock sportbike exhausts in the neighborhood, eh?) The affronts may be perceived riding ability or habits, cliqueishness or unsafe attire. One faction takes issue with the uniform a certain faction has adopted, because it's too flashy, too drab, too threatening or too green.

But mostly, we seem to have trouble with the bikes others ride. Guys of less performance-oriented models wonder why anyone wants to ride an ugly, uncomfortable-appearing motorcycle that goes 186 mph. Sportbike guys wonder why anyone would want to ride an ugly, uncomfortable-appearing cruiser than can only lean over a few degrees. Guys on light bikes can't conceive of why anyone would want to ride one of those giant tourers, while the touring guys wonder why people put up with no music, storage or passenger amenities. And *nobody* gives dual-sport bikes any respect.

Personally, I wonder how anyone gets by with just one motorcycle. You need at least one of each to really survive in this world. I just returned from a two-day, five-bike trek with sistership *Motorcycle Cruiser* with bikes ranging from 500 to 1500cc. They were all fun to ride on the roads, which ranged from interstates to dirty, twisty back roads. With one exception, you could have almost as much fun as you would on sportbikes in the twisties. Many sportbike riders would probably be surprised at how well some modern cruisers work on meandering macadam, and Honda's new Gold Wing promises some pleasant surprises off the beaten pavement also.

We weren't suffering on the superslab either on our ride. Many former touring-bike owners have found they don't give up anything but luggage capacity if they opt for the looks of a cruiser. Cruiser owners find modern sportbikes aren't nearly as uncomfortable as they expected (and vice-versa), and all that power might have a place after all. Sportbike enthusiasts are choosing cruisers as they discover the appeals of a slower-paced engine and riding style. And others are finally discovering that dual-sport bikes are the real secret treat.

This year, when you sign up for a demo ride, why not try a different type of bike other than the one you lust after. If the ride's long enough, I'll bet you discover that another sort of scoot is more fun and a better ride than you supposed.

And next time you see one of those things coming the other way, you'll wave and think, "He's having a gas too!" You might not want to dress like him, but under the uniform, you'll know he or she is a lot like you.

Friedman is the former editor of this magazine and Motorcycle Cruiser *and is currently working up a Web site for* Motorcyclist. *He can be e-mailed at friedmaa@emapUSA.com.*

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backfires

BONNIE DEAREST

I've never completely recovered from selling my 1976 Triumph Bonneville. I needed money for a wedding ring, and the Bonneville was the only thing I owned of any value. Eighteen years later I'm married to the same lovely woman, so I guess I made the right decision! ("You *guess*?" she screams!) I was happy to see the rebirth of the Triumph in the early '90s, but that style of bike didn't appeal to me. I craved the artistic simplicity of the old Bonneville, the way I could just stare at it and enjoy its lines.

So I went nuts when I read about the 2001 Bonneville in your November 2000 issue. I hope the bike's introduction is a big success. I also enjoyed reading Boehm's description of how the bike was developed. I'd change only two things: I'd add a tachometer and chrome fenders.

Paul McAfee
Tempe, AZ

As a baby boomer ripe to relive the James Dean fantasy, I just might be drawn to drop some money on a new Bonneville, even after owning a bunch of the newest and greatest bikes around. What disappoints me with the new Bonneville, though, is the cost-cutting that shows up in the glossy photos. Just compare the new bike with the 1960 Bonnie following the article and you'll find the older bike sporting a fuel tank that's a work of art. It is beautifully shaped and molded, with knee-pad inserts, a more interesting paint job, and no seams. Also, the deletion of the rubber fork covers, rear grab bar and the twin gauges all put budget-cutting above aesthetics. Believe me when I say that I am no Triumph purist, but I vividly remember the feeling and details of seeing that first Bonneville, parked curbside when I was catching the bus as a high school junior, and thinking, "Man, what a cool ride." Also, I don't buy the statement that "Triumph's product-planning group didn't originally set out to simply 'build a new-generation Bonneville' as many will assume when the Bonnie makes its world debut." The bike is too similar in too many respects for anyone to believe that.

Gary Garibaldi
Via e-mail

Many misunderstandings on your part, Garibaldi. First, the bike was designed and built to a specific—and very low—price point. Had Triumph had a $10,000 (and not $7000) retail budget to work with, the Bonnie would likely have been fitted with all manner of extras and options (though the tank's shape wouldn't have changed). You also misunderstood the meaning of the passage you quote at the end of your note. When the project first began in 1997, Triumph product planners had no idea they would end up building a retro-styled twin. But once they determined that's where their greatest chance of market success lay, they certainly strove to get as close to the original Bonnie feel and look as they could within the constraints of their budget.—Ed.

KYOICHI NAKAMURA

Although I've never had an interest in owning any vintage British iron, mostly because I don't think I have the patience or the time, I've always thought some of the Brit marques made some beautiful bikes in their day. Imagine my surprise when I got my November issue. The new Triumph Bonneville is beautiful! Kudos to John Bloor and company for producing this beauty.

Joe Vasconcelos
Via e-mail

Great article on the 2001 Bonneville. I'll likely buy one, as it seems like it has the right combination of looks, character, history and power for a 38-year-old whose RZ350 is getting tired. In fact, the Bonnie looks so right that the little flaws glare out at you; the bottom edge of the gas tank looks unfinished; red paint on the tank should extend beneath the badge to complete the look; and the bike should have a tach. It should also have a kickstarter as a bridge to the past, à la W650.

Ray Binder
Lakewood, OH

Sad that Triumph made the new Bonneville a retrobike; it doesn't interest me a bit. It would have been much better as a modern vertical-twin. I very nearly bought a new Bonnie in '78 but purchased a CB750K instead: price and reliability were deciding issues, although Bonnie had a "feel" I'll never forget. Suzuki should consider remodeling the 750 Katana into a standard and keep as many of the Katana upgrades as possible.

Joe Sewell
Belmont, NC

So, I'm out in the garage, furiously polishing my Drifter; frenzied scheming as to how I'm going to convince my long-suffering wife that I *need* a new Bonnie. "Honey, it would make an even *10* bikes!" Suddenly, my lovely wife runs into the garage and announces excitedly, "I know what bike I want!" pointing to Boehm's November Bonneville treatise. Hot damn! Am I a lucky bastard or *what*?!

Mike "the Bike" Dneper
Via e-mail

Hats off to Boehm and Cathcart for their work on the development of the new Bonneville. It was a fascinating story about the gargantuan task of bringing a new bike into production. Keep up the great work.

Bill Thalgott
Via e-mail

Nice-looking bike, and I enjoyed the review. One thing I need to know before I'd consider purchasing the bike, though; does it have Lucas electrics?

Larry Ortega
Via e-mail

I've been buying and subscribing to car and motorcycle magazines since the late 1940s, and your November 2000 issue with the story and photos on the new Triumph Bonneville is the first in all those years to give me an almost sexual thrill. And that's hard to do at the age of 72! My first bike was a 1947 Triumph 350, and I went through several larger Triumphs over the years, including a 1950 650cc Thunderbird and a 1959 650 Bonneville. I like the new bike's mufflers, disc brakes and overall looks, but I don't like the left-side shifting (nearly died when I pushed the wrong pedal on my three-cylinder Kawasaki and slid across my front yard), the overly complex eight-valve engine (I've always done my own maintenance) and lack of a kickstarter (for lazy

continued on page 68

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Up to Speed

compiled by
Garrett Kai

JAPAN: Don Helle **EUROPE:** Alan Cathcart and Roland Brown **MIDWEST DESK:** Darwin Holmstrom

Ducati Monster S4

FIRST RIDE

FEW NEW MODELS HAVE BEEN AS eagerly touted as the S4 Monster, not only because it's always seemed such an obvious thing to do, but also because Monster guru Miguel Galluzzi's idea back in 1991 was to fit the *otto valvole* Superbike engine rather than the *desmodue* two-valver. Developing the S4 in what it claims is record time for a new model, Ducati adopted a parts-bin approach combined with computer technology: This is the first time the company has used the advanced Unigraphics software for 3-D modeling, says design chief Pierre Terblanche. For the S4, Ducati has taken a modified version of the ST4 sport-tourer's Brembo-built tubular spaceframe and fitted a revised version of its 916cc *desmoquattro* engine, with a bore and stroke of 94 x 68mm. Producing a claimed 101 bhp at 8750 rpm, with peak torque at 7000 rpm, the motor has revised cam timing, a bigger airbox and remapped Marelli EFI to deliver better midrange instead of the ST4's mile-eating top speed.

In a day embracing everything from traffic-clogged Bologna rush hour to the switchback turns of the legendary Futa Pass, it became clear that this is a mighty and muscular motorcycle. Perched forward and atop in a close-coupled riding position, with short, flat clip-ons on top of the 43mm inverted Showa fork, the Monster gives a much sportier stance than main competitor Cagiva's more relaxed Raptor. The drawback to sitting so forward is that when riding the S4 in jeans, as most *tifosi* will do, your legs are exposed to a quite

KEL EDGE

Sir Alan snags a ride on one of the first eight-valve Monsters off the line

noticeable amount of heat from the liquid-cooled motor.

Free that trademark boom from the low-set twin silencers, and you're introduced to a world of muscular grunt coupled with an appetite for revs. The six-speed gearbox has ratios inviting you to ride the torque curve, so cracking the throttle wide as low as 3000 rpm has the Ducati thundering toward the next turn, with the front wheel hovering above the ground. Buzz the engine to the 9200-rpm rev limiter if you must, but there seems little point.

You can ride the S4 as a naked 916/996, using the dynamic qualities of Ducati's world-title winning Superbikes to cane it hard-round twisty country roads and max out the very capable handling. Or you can treat it as the ultimate point-and-squirt performance package, in which case the Brembo brakes (straight off the customer Superbikes) offer up a huge degree of bite with progressivity. Wave the back wheel in the air if you want to. The Showa fork gives good ride quality and irons out any bumps you might run into when cranked over while taking advantage of the impressive cornering clearance. Then simply grunt out of the corner.

When you do, the fully adjustable Sachs shock can be dialed in just right to maximize grip, though it's a shame Ducati didn't fit the single-sided *monobraccia* swingarm. Ducati had to be careful not to price the S4 out of its marketplace. That probably also explains the lack of a temperature gauge on a liquid-cooled motorcycle, as well as the semi-flimsy construction of the nose fairing and rear tailpiece. The way the wind deflector waves around while you're riding is both distracting and annoying. The radiator, too, sticks out, unprotected, on either side of the engine, and would be vulnerable in an accident. Best not to think about such things.

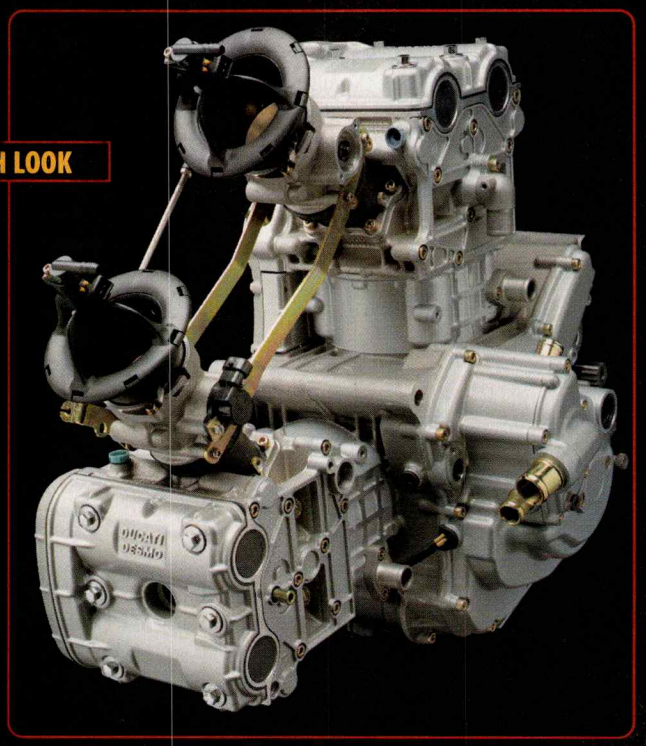
Those, though, are details. Ducati has turned a long-awaited page with the advent of the S4 Monster. This one's in a class of its own.

—Alan Cathcart

Power Play!

TECH LOOK

Ducati's new-generation Superbike didn't show for 2001, but its engine did. Here's a look



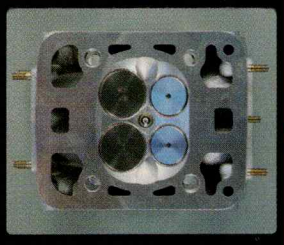
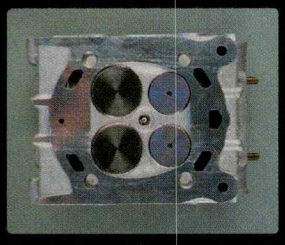
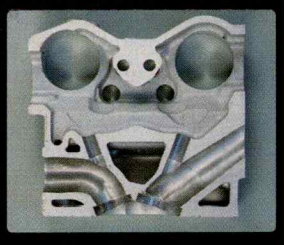
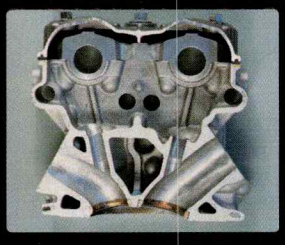
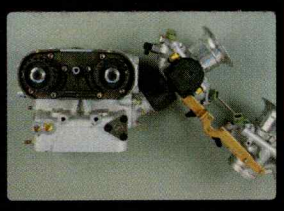
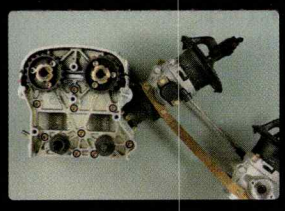
DUCATI'S LONG-AWAITED NEW engine, *Testastretta* (narrow-head), made its debut at last September's Intermot show, hidden behind the carbon fiber fairing of an outwardly normal-looking 996. Now that Honda's RC51 has proven it's for real, Bologna's response is to go for more horsepower via a more oversquare, higher-revving powerplant. The *Testastretta* gets 2mm bigger bores and a 2.5mm shorter stroke, resulting in an actual displacement of 998cc.

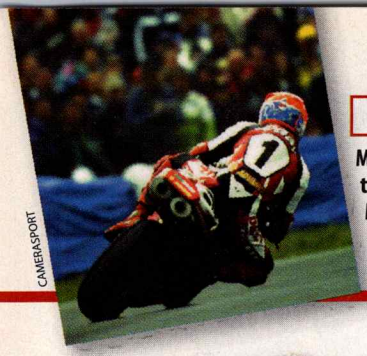
The same shower-type injection seen on the 748R is used, ordered about by a more intelligent, 5.9 megahertz CPU. On the 748R, the shortness of the throttle bodies alters intake resonance and lets that bike make a bunch more power than the vanilla 748.

The road version, Ducati claims, puts out 135 horsepower at 10,200 rpm—13 more than last year's 996SPS, at 200 fewer rpm. Speaking of the road version, Ducati built 350 for world consumption, of a total run of 500 bikes. All 350 were snapped up over www.ducati.com the day of the Munich introduction for 26,000 Euros ($23,900 at press time).

The other 150 "upgraded" racing versions—a third of which are on the boat to North America—are reserved for card-carrying racers. *—John Burns*

Old vs. New

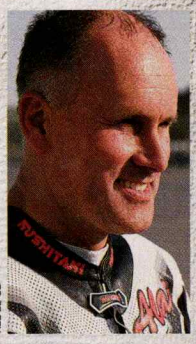
996	TESTASTRETTA	
		New, 100mm bores make room for 40mm intake and 33mm exhaust valves, inside flatter combustion chambers with more squish area. These sorts of things are supposed to make the 996R go 174 mph.
		Pushing the cams closer together allowed the flatter combustion chamber; included angle is down from 40 to 25 degrees. That should create a faster-burning chamber, which is a good thing at higher rpm.
		Shower-type injectors give optimal fuel atomization, and allow shorter intake tracts for tricky intake tuning. Throttle bodies are 54mm in diameter.



CAMERASPORT

FOGGY CALLS IT QUITS!

Factory Ducati rider and four-time World Superbike Champion Carl Fogarty has announced he will retire immediately from motorcycle racing. Recent testing at Mugello, Italy, proved highly difficult for the 35-year-old Fogarty, who shattered his left humerus near the shoulder joint in the Australian round of WSC competition earlier in 2000 and has worked to get healthy ever since. Fogarty had difficulty at Mugello assuming his normal racing crouch and was struggling with directional changes and braking. The injury has left him with permanent weakness and loss of movement in his arm and shoulder. Despite his retirement, however, Fogarty and Ducati will continue to work together in future endeavors.



KEL EDGE

Euro Notes

by Alan Cathcart

■ Aprilia boss Ivano Beggio has gone on the record in an interview with Italy's *Motociclismo* magazine about his future plans for Moto Guzzi, the first in Aprilia's array of trophy marques that the fast-growing Italian company took over earlier this year in a fiercely contested Dutch auction with Ducati, MV Agusta and Piaggio.

Rather than the 6000 bikes that have trickled out of Guzzi's historic but archaic Mandello plant in the past year, Beggio is targeting an eventual annual production of 30,000 motorcycles from the factory on the shores of Lake Como, which will be retained as the modernized manufacturing base of Italy's oldest extant bike marque—a permanent reminder of Guzzi's glorious history. So in what promises to be another example of the exciting architectural blend of the traditional and avant-garde that the Italian industry has consistently proved so capable of achieving, Beggio intends to transform Mandello into a combination of high-tech factory and living museum, with landmarks such as the famous wind tunnel, front gates and factory museum preserved and interspersed with ultra-modern office space and R&D/manufacturing facilities.

Within this blend of high technology and industrial archaeology, the Aprilia boss plans to create the Italian equivalent of Harley-Davidson or Triumph, two other equally historic marques riding the wave of the retro revival after experiencing difficult times in the recent past. To accomplish this, Beggio says he'll focus on the trademark transverse V-twin architecture of the current range, which future Guzzis will retain but with a more modern, improved engine design that will be used to develop a range of upmarket niche models standing apart from Aprilia's own products.

Moto Guzzi V11 Sport

As part of the need to differentiate the two marques, Beggio specifically rules out any chance that Moto Guzzi will return to competition: That's Aprilia's job, in both GP and Superbike racing. But there will be new sporting as well as custom and roadster models further down the line, powered by a new family of medium- to large-displacement V-twin motors owing nothing to the existing Aprilia RSV Mille range. Expect to see the first new Moto Guzzi models in 2003—not before, since it takes three years to develop a new engine, says Beggio. But, after that, anticipate a flow of new models from the born-again historic Italian marque.

■ The Bimota Drako, the Ducati 900SS-engined Mantra-framed naked bike that had been under development (see Up To Speed, November 2000), was notably absent in Munich. Bimota's latest was not on display because of the decision on June 30 to put the Rimini-based firm into liquidation.

A rescue package was being mounted by a British investor, with a goal of relaunching Bimota at Intermot. That man is Victor Gauntlett, the former oil magnate and chairman of Aston Martin who first bailed out, then successfully revitalized, the historic British car firm during the 1980s. Gauntlett had envisioned starting a similar operation with Bimota that would have resulted in leasing the company for a five-year period from the present group of owners (led by SCM woodworking/machinery magnate Adriano Aureli) prior to completing a sale at the end of that period based on the success or otherwise of his turnaround operation. But Gauntlett was unable to agree to terms with Aureli & Co. and the British-based rescue plan is now dead, leaving the Rimini-based firm very close to permanent closure.

Bimota Drako

KEL EDGE

There's still hope for those who admire and want Bimota's mixture of leading-edge chassis technology and distinctive design. A group of investors, headed by Bimota's U.S. importer Bob Smith, is understood to have tabled an offer to take over the company, and Italian sources insist that the Merloni family, which controls Benelli, are also in negotiations to buy Bimota. But perhaps the most fascinating possibility currently being rumored is for Cagiva/MV Agusta to take over Bimota, which would then be developed both as a marque in its own right and as a specialist manufacturer of limited-edition Cagiva and MV Agusta models. In which case, the wheel would come full circle, since the man heading up such a corporate marriage would be none other than Massimo Tamburini, the "ta" in Bimota and one of the company's founding partners in 1973. What goes around, comes around?

More 2001 Models

One you can have, one you can't

Kawasaki ZRX1200S

CBR929RR Erion Racing Edition

KEVIN WING

Here are two additions to the crop of new-for-2001 models we showed you last month: Honda's Erion Racing Edition CBR929RR and Kawasaki's not-for-sale-in-the-United States ZRX1200S. The CBR929RR commemorates Kurtis Roberts's 2000 Formula Xtreme championship, and will be produced in what Honda says are "substantial" numbers—which means you'll likely be able to find one at a dealer near you. The price? $10,999, $1000 more than the standard model. Kawasaki's for-Europe-only ZRX1200S is basically the same machine we get here in the States except for a swoopy fairing and instrument cluster. Kawasaki tells us it has no plans to bring the S-model to the United States. And, from the looks of it, we don't mind at all. We think the retro-Superbike ZRX we've been getting for two years now is a far better-looking scoot.

Back to School

The MSF Updates the RiderCourse

"Look at me! Come to me!" MSF instructors know these commands simply as part of Exercise 11, Making Sharp Turns. They're just two of the more than 40 coaching and direction commands every instructor gives during the Riding & Street Skills Motorcycle (beginner) RiderCourse, originally developed in 1974 by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation. In addition to the commands, MSF instructors cover every foot of the half-acre range on designated spots, directing a dozen novice riders as they weeble and wobble, and sometimes fall down. Even though two instructors can teach up to 12 students, the instructor's job can be downright exhausting.

But according to Elisabeth Piper, MSF Director of Corporate Affairs, they are about to get some relief and a new title: Rider Coaches. Piper recently met with more than 100 MSF Chief Instructors and state coordinators to introduce revisions to the way RiderCourses are taught. Chief Instructors are certified by MSF to teach Instructors, who in turn instruct students to ride more safely through the RSS and Experienced RiderCourses. "The new program will allow Rider Coaches to more fully focus on the individual skill levels and needs of the student," says Piper, "while still concentrating on the skills most lacking in accident-involved motorcyclists: braking, cornering and swerving." The changes will provide more range riding time in the same 15-hour core curriculum.

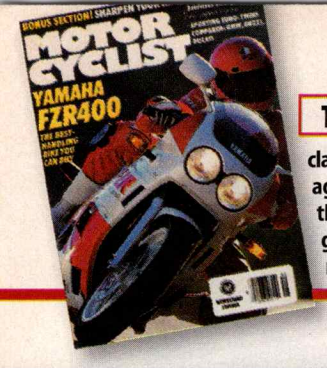
Missouri state coordinator and Chief Instructor Terry Butler agrees that the changes will improve the quality of the student's education and learning experience by focusing on their individual needs. Butler feels the revised program allows students to assume ownership of their training and success as an active participant in the learning process, rather than just a recipient of instruction. "It will improve the quality of the instructor's experience as well," says Butler. "By being even more student-centered, the instructor will continue to focus on the student's needs and facilitate a rewarding experience for both student and Rider Coach."

The revisions to the student courses, however, will not change the strenuous requirements necessary to become a Rider Coach. Instructor candidates will still undergo 65 hours of intensive training before they can be certified to conduct RiderCourses. Chief Instructors like Butler say they look for more than just impeccable riding skills in instructors; they also require excellent communication skills, patience and the desire to teach. Piper says the new RiderCourse will be introduced in January 2001, with each state individually administering its implementation. She believes that the revisions to the way the Rider Coach facilitates the program will increase instructor recruitment and retention, which should result in more class capacity.

CHRIS CIMINO

Instructor Mark Sinnett, an emergency-room doctor, shows a student the space cushion between stopping and colliding with the car in front.

Since the education program's inception, more than 4500 MSF instructors have graduated 1.8 million students, including over 188,000 in 1999 alone. MSF classes are available in all 50 states, and all but eight accept completion of the RiderCourse as a waiver for the state motorcycle skills exam. MSF also offers courses for dirt bike riding and some state programs have even developed ERC classes for two-up riding and ATVs. Most insurance companies offer 10–20 percent discounts for completion of an MSF course and some manufacturers and organizations offer reimbursement of course tuition. For the nearest RiderCourse, call MSF at (800) 446-9227 or visit their Web site at www.msf-usa.org. *—Chris Cimino*



TIME WARP **Sporty touring was on our minds when we pitted the top European sport-tourers—Ducati 750 Paso, BMW R100RS and Moto Guzzi 1000 Le Mans—against one another in our May 1988 issue. We also proclaimed Yamaha's all-new FZR400 to be the "best handling bike you can buy." Its massive delta-box aluminum frame, aggressive steering geometry and wide cast-aluminum wheels (three-inch front and four-inch rear!) combined to create the finest handling "of any production motorcycle." Alas, we were right in commenting that "American sportbike tastes generally run toward larger machinery, 600cc and above," as the FZR would only survive for three years in U.S. showrooms. What's funny is that some of today's sportbikes have more than twice the horsepower and are almost as light.**

DOUBLE RED PHOTOGRAPHIC

DOUBLE RED PHOTOGRAPHIC

Although BMW denies it, the rumor mill suggests the sport version of the R1100S will be part of the German manufacturer's lineup in 2002.

BMW R1100S Sport

An S Boxer with a bit more sport

RUMOR HAS IT THAT BMW'S R1100S Sport, currently available only in Britain as a limited-edition model produced by the United Kingdom importer, could feature in the German marque's official line-up in the near future. BMW (GB) Ltd.'s aim in developing the S Sport was to produce a boxer better suited to hard riding, especially on track days.

The solution already existed in BMW's accessories brochure, which lists 1100S chassis tuning parts including firmer suspension, longer rear shock, wider rear wheel and a steering damper. Adding all these extras to the standard model would leave an R1100S rider considerably lighter-of-wallet, so the importer followed the example set by BMW's car division, which offers higher-specification SE versions of several models at a price well below the combined cost of the extras. In the case of the Sport, of which 100 units are being produced this year, the cost is only £350 ($525) on top of the standard boxer, at £7995 ($12,000).

For that outlay, front and rear suspension is firmed-up with shocks internally reworked for increased damping. The rear shock is an inch longer, which sharpens steering and increases cornering clearance. That might tend to reduce stability, so the Sport also gets a steering damper.

Tires are upgraded to a wider, 180/55 Bridgestone BT56 (or Michelin Hi-Sport) on a 5.5-inch rim at the rear, and in fact the one-size bigger tire gives a bit more clearance, too.

The Sport worked well enough at a recent Cadwell Park track day to make me think the price premium represents good value. The new bike doesn't exactly slice into turns like a true sportbike, but does feel respectably nimble.

The 1100S isn't quick steering by sportbike standards, but its raised rear end does speed up right-left transitions. Cornering clearance isn't a problem, just; the chamfered rear brake lever confirmed that the Sport's extra ride height is useful. Stability is fine despite the quicker geometry.

Cadwell's Mansfield bend is a sharp left-hander preceded by hard braking down a steep hill, where the Telelever front end was firm enough to keep the big boxer good and steady tipping in. The front BT56 gripped well there, and the fattened-up rear was fine on the exits, too—even if it did lead me into temptation, aboard the standard bike on the next session, when I wound on the power too hard over patchy tarmac and provoked a big slide.

To add insult to that incident's near-injury, I was outbraked into the following right-hander on the next lap by an S that turned out to be fitted with PFM brakes. These are seriously powerful anchors, as I confirmed when my chance came to ride that bike.

Some of the bikes at Cadwell also featured a free-breathing exhaust system from the South African firm Vanderlinde. This combines a stainless steel 2-into-1-into-2 pipe and high-level silencers with a replacement chip for the Motronic fuel-injection system. The exhaust reduces weight by five pounds as well as increasing power throughout the range, boosting peak output by 6 bhp, to 104 bhp at 8000 rpm.

Adding the trick brakes and free-breathing pipe (which costs £625/$940 and isn't street-legal) makes the Sport expensive for a bike that is still a bit off the pace of most proper sport machines. But then you still get the normal R1100S benefits of torquey power delivery, shaft drive, reasonable comfort and BMW build quality, not to mention unmistakable looks (and exasperating switchgear).

If racetrack performance is a priority, even this rejuvenated twin is not really fast or aggressive enough. But the British importer's efforts give the boxer a new lease on life for riders who like to combine track days and longer road trips in roughly equal measure. Rumor has it that observers from Munich are impressed, too, and are considering adding the R1100S Sport to the official range—though at the moment BMW denies it.

—Roland Brown

THE ALL-NEW INTRUDER VOLUSIA. PLENTY OF BIKE. PLENTY OF ATTITUDE.

From alleyways to highways, the Intruder® Volusia™ garners attention wherever it roams. No small wonder either. Because after all, it comes equipped with everything you could possibly want in a cruiser. We're, of course, talking about its stunning retro-styling, featuring a beautifully sculpted fuel tank, deeply valanced fenders, spoked wheels, wide tires, even wider handlebars and brilliantly chromed dual exhaust. Not to mention a potent V-twin engine that can easily take you wherever your heart desires. So get out there on the open road. And don't be surprised if people toss a few stares your way. Just don't take it the wrong way.

SUZUKI

For more information, including complete product specifications, visit www.suzuki.com.

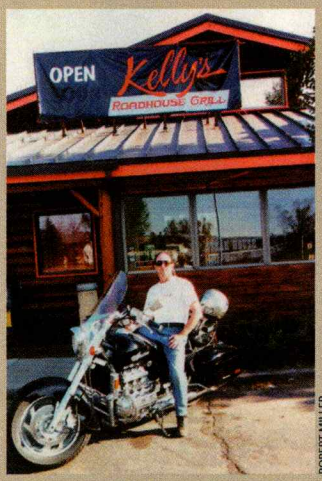
CALL 1-800-828-RIDE FOR MORE INFORMATION. At Suzuki, we want every ride to be safe and enjoyable. So always wear a helmet, eye protection and protective clothing. Never ride under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Study your owner's manual and always inspect your Suzuki before riding. Take a riding skills course. For the course nearest you call the Motorcycle Safety Foundation at 1-800-446-9227.

TORNADO WARNING, PART II A year after Benelli stunned the sportbike world with the introduction of its three-cylinder Tornado sportster, the production version is finally here. Changes from the prototype include 16 additional horses from more available revs (thanks to more oversquare engine dimensions), a wet clutch (for reduced weight) and redesigned seat and headlight assemblies. Like MV Agusta did with its F4 and F4S, Benelli plans to offer Tornados in two main phases: a hand-built, limited production phase beginning in January 2001, and a less-exclusive—and less-pricey—phase later on. Sadly, Benelli is still at least a year from being able to offer Tornados in the United States.

Kelly's Roadhouse Grill

GETAWAYS

The best damned bar in the West



ROBERT MILLER

AT THE END OF A DAY THAT included the most scenic road of your life (Utah Route 12), an 11,000-foot pass and the Dixie National Forest, you roll into the high mountain town of Evanston, Wyoming. Flagging down the first rider you see, you ask where a fellow traveler might find a cold beer and a hot sandwich. From the seat of his customized Sportster the rider says, "Kelly's, man; it's the best damned bar in the West," then roars off into the Wyoming sunset.

Kelly's Roadhouse Grill advertises itself as being "Cowboy and Biker Friendly," but it's a whole lot more than that simple claim. A wrap-around deck surrounds an expansive log building housing the bar and restaurant. Around the bar you'll see Harley-Davidson decor hanging from the ceiling, pool cues lining the walls and, in the center of the floor, a single pool table covered in black velvet and topped with a low-hanging fluorescent light. In the background are the sounds of big twin-cylinder motorcycles from nearby I-80 as the parking lot begins to fill with dual-wheeled pickup trucks and 10-gallon-hatted cowboys.

When your stomach starts growling, you wander outside and seat yourself at an Umbrella-covered patio table. Overhead, the first stars are dotting that big western sky while the horizon still has a yellowish glow. You ask for a menu and the waitress brings you a single sheet of photocopied paper covered with a handwritten list of appetizers, entrees and desserts. It's simple, but effective. The teriyaki chicken with tacos and hot potato salad catches your eye. It's the most elaborate entree on a menu filled with foods your doctor wouldn't recommend for a healthy heart.

With good food, cold beer, motorcycle decor and plenty of billiards action, Kelly's Roadhouse Grill is a must-visit when in Wyoming. Kelly's is open 365 days a year, and offers live music Friday and Saturday nights starting at 9 P.M.

—Robert Miller

KELLY'S ROADHOUSE GRILL (307) 783-7464
240 Bear River Drive, Evanston, Wyoming
Monday–Thursday 4 P.M.–2 A.M.
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TEAR-OFFS

■ Ducati unveiled its latest technology recently, **a new electronic handlebar mounted gearshift** at a recent test at Mugello. Factory riders Troy Bayliss and Rubens Xaus tested the F1-derived system on the new Ducati 996R. An automatic onboard computer system allows the rider to shift without the use of the clutch, and shifting is done simply by the touch of button. The wave of the future? We'll see.

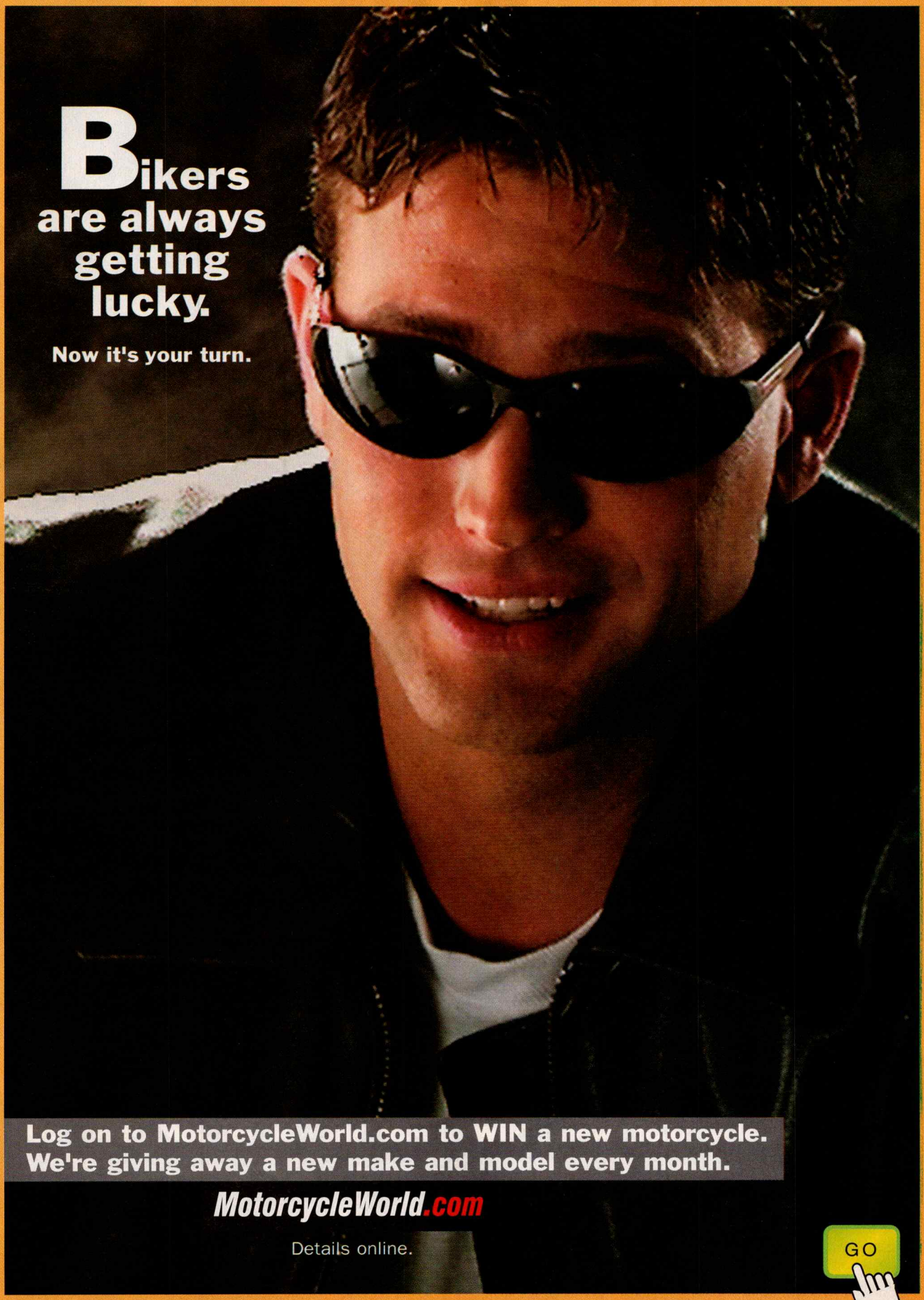
■ **Honda** has announced that it will have a four-stroke GP bike available for racing in 2002. The engine configuration has yet to be determined but will have any number of cylinders from two to five and Honda is still debating whether or not to use oval pistons for the new four-stroke engine. According to HRC chairman Yasuo Ikenoya, the new bike will not use exotic materials or F1 technology such as pneumatic valves, in an effort to keep costs under control. Everything is still on the drawing board and due to be finalized by the end of the year with testing to begin in the spring.

■ Can you ever start too young? Apparently in Ohio you can. **An Ohio bill** has been introduced by Senator Anthony Latell Jr. that would prohibit children under the age of 11 years old from riding as passengers on motorcycles, with the only exception being sidecar passengers. The AMA is on the case and believes that parents are the best bet in determining if their children should ride as passengers and at what age. Let the AMA know what you think at www.ama-cycle.org.

■ According to a new study from the United States Department of Transportation, motorcycle deaths increased following the repeal in 1997 of **mandatory helmet laws** in Arkansas and Texas. In Arkansas, motorcycle fatalities rose 21 percent in the first year following the repeal, while deaths rose 31 percent in Texas during that same time. Twenty states and the District of Columbia have mandatory helmet laws for all motorcycle riders, while another 27 states require helmet use under a specific age, usually 18 years old.

■ We've hired a **new Associate Editor**, folks, and his name is Garrett Kai. Garrett, who's 30 years old and recently married, hails from Hawaii, where he grew up riding dirt bikes. He was even able to fit in a bit of roadracing while earning a degree at the University of Hawaii. Garrett comes to us from Lockhart-Phillips, where he was marketing manager. His current rides are a Honda CB-1 and a brand-new ZX-6R. Cook has been busy breaking him in....

JIM BROWN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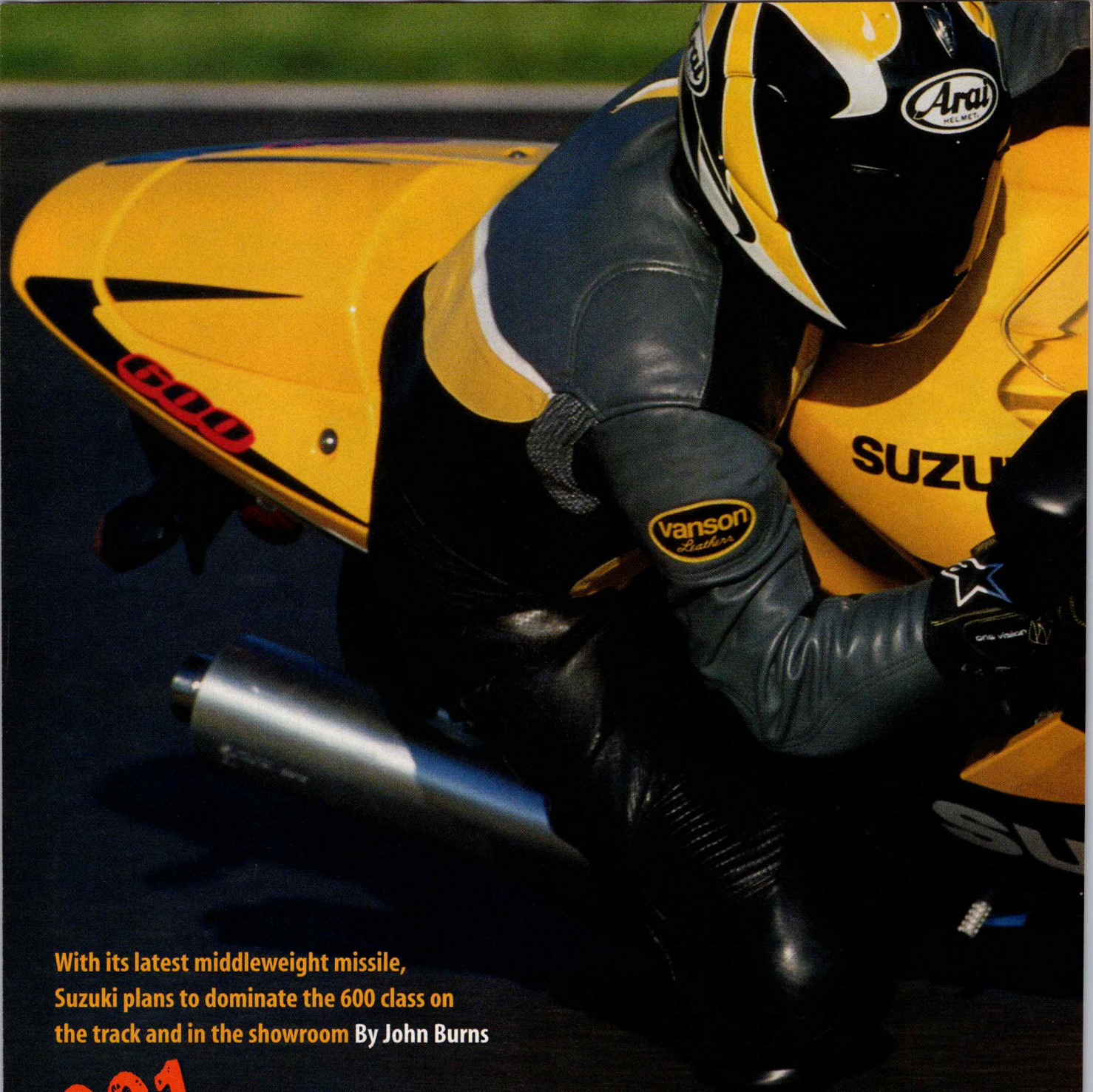


With its latest middleweight missile, Suzuki plans to dominate the 600 class on the track and in the showroom By John Burns

2001 Suzuki GSX-R600

Dateline: Road Atlanta, 16 October 2000

YEAH, I SUPPOSE I'D LIKE TO OWN A 2001 GSX-R600, BUT KNOWING WHAT LITTLE I do about racing, I'd feel guilty every time I took the thing out for a street ride. Really, everyone who's into these things should get a chance, like Suzuki occasionally provides us magazine types, to go someplace like Road Atlanta (RA) in the company of guys who can actually make these bikes sweat—your Aaron Yateses, your Tray Bateys, your Melissas from Army of Darkness Endurance—and get an up-close-and-personal look at how trackworthy bikes like this GSX-R have become. If you buy one and never take it to the track, you can have no idea of the thing's ridiculous capability. Using it as a streetbike is like using a Phantom jet for crop-dusting.

Now that we know our way around the track, we have a high-speed freight train of man and machine all hooked up, knees dragging, D207GPs slithering. So how do both Yates and Batey jam inside me and the two guys ahead of me in Turn Six in a single swoop? I, for one, am clueless—but the interesting thing is they'll come in and tell you the bike works great for them too. A little softly sprung out of the crate, but not bad.

FIRST RIDE

Road Atlanta had just hosted Suzuki's 15th annual Grand National Final roadraces the day before we rode. It's an up-and-down circuit that TV doesn't do justice, and after every rise the track's littered with short black marks where people's front tires have come back down at a buck-whatever before plunging down the next blind mineshaft or half-mile straight. Guys who race motorcycles are almost certifiable. Guys like Yates have way different calibration than most of us, and he seems genuinely excited at the prospect of riding the new bike in 600 Supersport this coming season. I don't think he's just spouting the company line, either. Suzuki says it's decided to dominate 600-class racing the way it's GSX-R750 overdogs 750 Supersport. We shall see.

Your first sit on the bike tells you there's more motorcycle out front than the stubby Yamaha YZF-R6, probably because the GSX-R is 750-sized. On the other hand, Suzuki claims it sawed 24 pounds from the old GSX-R600, and once underway the bike feels way light. Compared with the R6, the Suzuki's defining characteristic seems to be stability—as long as you pay attention to the fact you're riding a streetbike that handles like a recent-vintage GP racer. Avoid the bumps and stay light on the clip-ons and footpegs and the bike rails precisely down the hill toward where the gravity cavity thankfully no longer exists. Hit the bumps, get a bit clumsy and the bike will tell you to chill with a few twitches through the bars. It's not threatening, just communicating, dear.

Then again, it's only a 600—what could happen? The bike does have a 20mm-longer swingarm than before, and does carry a greater percentage of its weight over the front wheel. Like the R6, then, you can yank the throttle open early exiting corners. With Suzuki's SDTV working to keep the fuel-injection transitioning smoothly from off-throttle to on, it's a fine thing to dive into corners while easing from brakes to gas. Bikes as good as this

GSX-R600 Tech

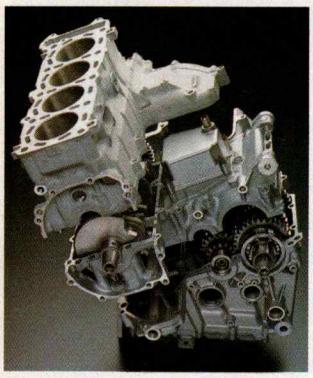
Suzuki prescribes a SDTV for its little one

THE JAPANESE CONTINUE TO GO AT each other hammer and tongs in 600 super-sport development, having closed range enough for Suzuki to break out its latest flamethrower. Although based upon and built by the same group of engineers who created the current GSX-R750, the new 600 is its own specific creature.

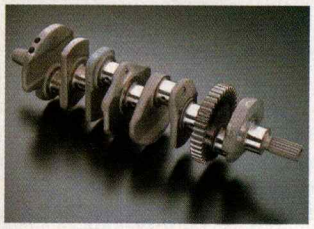
Like the Tom Petty song suggests, the weighting is the hardest part. Suzuki claims this one scales in at 24 pounds less than its last-generation (1997–2000) GSX-R600, which we translate to mean 416 pounds with a full load of fuel. Smaller, too: The skinnier new engine and 7mm closer-to-each-other fork tubes make the whole bike narrower and results in four percent less drag, Suzuki says.

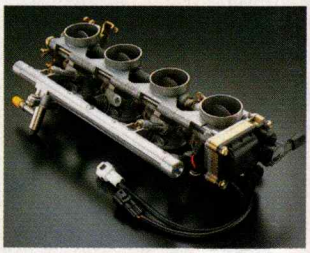
That much less weight and wind resistance should nicely complement the new motor, which Suzuki says is "4.5 percent more efficient." The new GSX-R1000 shares a cylinder head with the 750, but the 600 gets its own. Sealing each more oversquare 67.0 x 42.5mm bore is an all-new combustion chamber with a narrower included angle between the two 27.2mm intake valves (0.7mm bigger than before) and likewise bigger exhaust valves in each chamber. That narrower angle let Suzuki cast even steeper-angled intake ports, and 0.5mm narrower valve stems obstruct airflow even less. Overall, the new head's more compact and two pounds lighter.

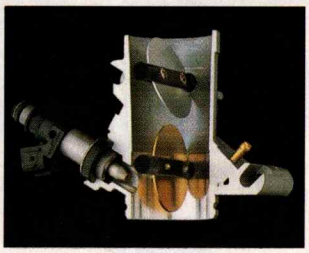
The big deal is fuel injection. The lighter the crankshaft, the tougher it is to have power feed back in smoothly as the throttle is first cracked open. In a car, the heavy crank



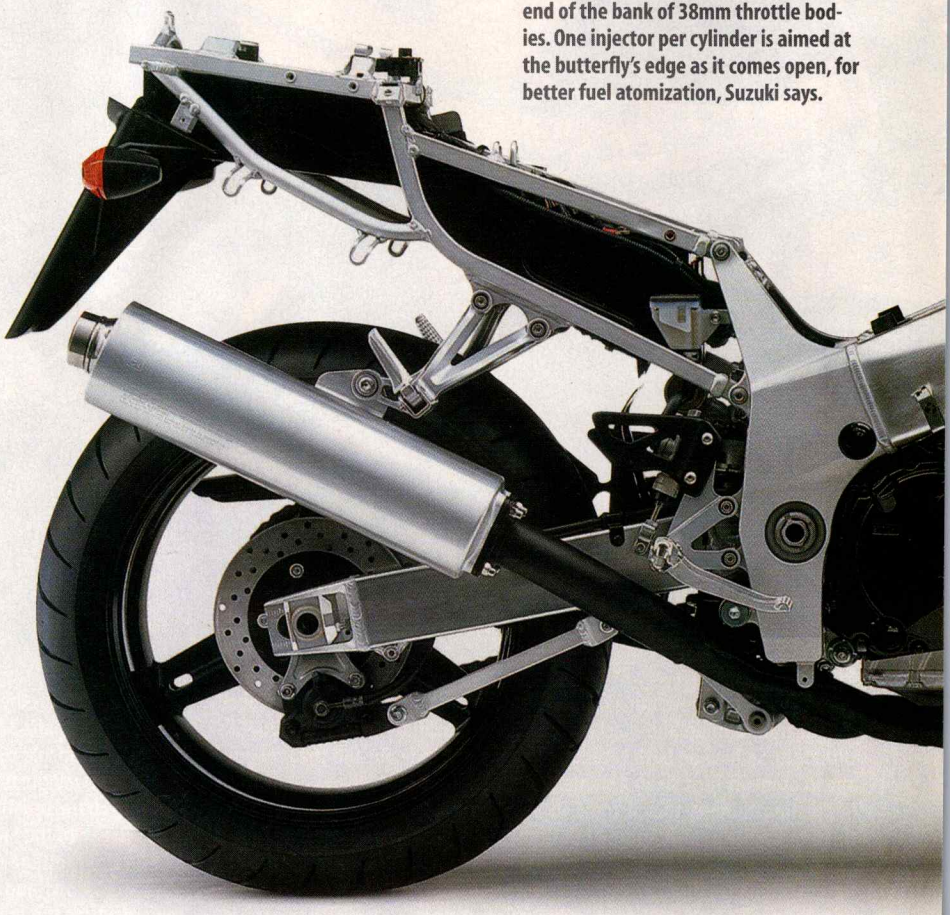
Like the 750, the new 600 sports a single-piece upper crankcase/cylinder block, while retaining the three-story architecture of before: "Semi-cassette gearbox" is a nice way of saying you can dig into the gearbox without having to disturb the crankshaft. (But that's still a lot of work compared with slipping the trans out the side, isn't it?) The lower crankcase is nearly identical to the 750/1000 piece, but supports the 600's own five-bearing crankshaft, complete with 32mm main bearings and 31mm big-ends—considerably smaller than before for reduced friction, among other advantages. Shot-peened rods pump forged pistons (on lighter, smaller, tapered pins) wearing low-tension rings. It all sounds terribly revvy.







Your human software operates one set of butterflies in the intake tracts, but a second, computer-controlled set located above them has the final say about admitting more air into the engine—and Mr. 16-Bit/96-byte has specific orders not to let in a big hunk of atmosphere all of a sudden no matter how you hack and saw at the throttle. The "torque box" that controls the secondary butterflies mounts right there at the end of the bank of 38mm throttle bodies. One injector per cylinder is aimed at the butterfly's edge as it comes open, for better fuel atomization, Suzuki says.



almost allow you to ride better than you are.

Overall, the bike's suspension has that same in-control feel as the R6 and big brother GSX-R750. Rolling on race tires during our track day, the bike has the zero-slop feel of the R6: Yank the bars and turn right now. A 45mm Showa fork and an all-new big-piston aluminum shock out back seem perfectly capable, and fade-free, too.

Power-wise, reputable tuners we spoke to say they're seeing 103–106 stock Dynojet horsepower out of these bikes after a couple hundred break-in miles, and if the 600's anything like the 750 (it is), several more horses after a few thousand miles. That's more than the R6, the current 600-class power broker. Once again, a big fast track like RA makes it really difficult to gauge power, and those long straights work a 600 like a rented mule. Luckily, this mule has no trouble scream-

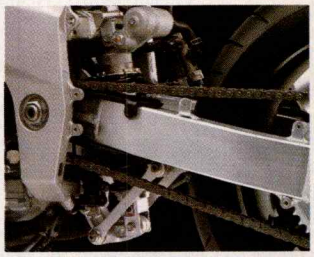
and big chunk of automobile it's dragging around damp out whatever power spike there might be. On Suzuki's Hayabusa, you can feel a slight surge when you get back on the gas, but that too is a heavyish bike with a heavyish crank. 600cc sportbikes like the GSX-R have light, revvy crankshafts, and that makes them poor candidates for fuel injection. Manufacturers have preferred constant-velocity carburetors on their 600s: You twist the throttle, but it's the carburetor's vacuum system that pulls the slide up and admits air at the proper rate, foolproof and generally spikeless. The GSX-R750 uses SDTV (Suzuki Dual Throttle Valve), which simulates that CV-type action with fuel injection. On the 750, it works very well.

It only really matters on the racetrack, when you're skittering along the edge of traction but wanting to get back on the power. Even a tiny jolt of power under those circumstances can incite a confrontation with gravity. Lucky for us, Supersport racing rules require stock carburetion, so Suzuki has to give us street geeks the good stuff, too (to have any chance of success on the track, that is).

Running gear closely mimics the current 750 also, not a bad thing as that bike was modeled upon Suzuki's resurgent 500 Grand Prix machine. With a 55.1-inch (1400mm) wheelbase, the GSX-R isn't the shortest in the class (in fact that's 10mm longer than before), and rake/trail of 24 degrees/3.8 inches aren't the steepest or the shortest. On paper, then, the GSX-R isn't the swiftest-turning. But that longer wheelbase did make room for a 20mm longer swingarm while placing more weight on the front wheel, and Suzuki brags that the 500 helped it find those "sweet numbers." Do they work as well in 600 racing? We'll have to find out from Mladin and Yates or whoever Suzuki drafts to flush the Yamahas and Hondas and Kawasakis out of Mt. Suribachi. For the rest of us, it's an excellent time to spectate from the relative safety of the Budweiser Balcony. —*J.B.*

The tachometer turns red somewhere shortly past 14,000 rpm, but a few choice tidbits from the aftermarket could make that redline as disregardable as the traffic light at Western and Wilshire.

Reduced engine width lets the whole bike get skinnier and faster, but maybe only with an anorexic rider. The smaller engine made room for a bigger airbox and more efficient ram-air. Cartridge fork tubes 7mm closer are also supposed to let the littlest GSX-R slice atmosphere faster. No longer taking chances, Suzuki's is the first 600 to sport a steering damper.

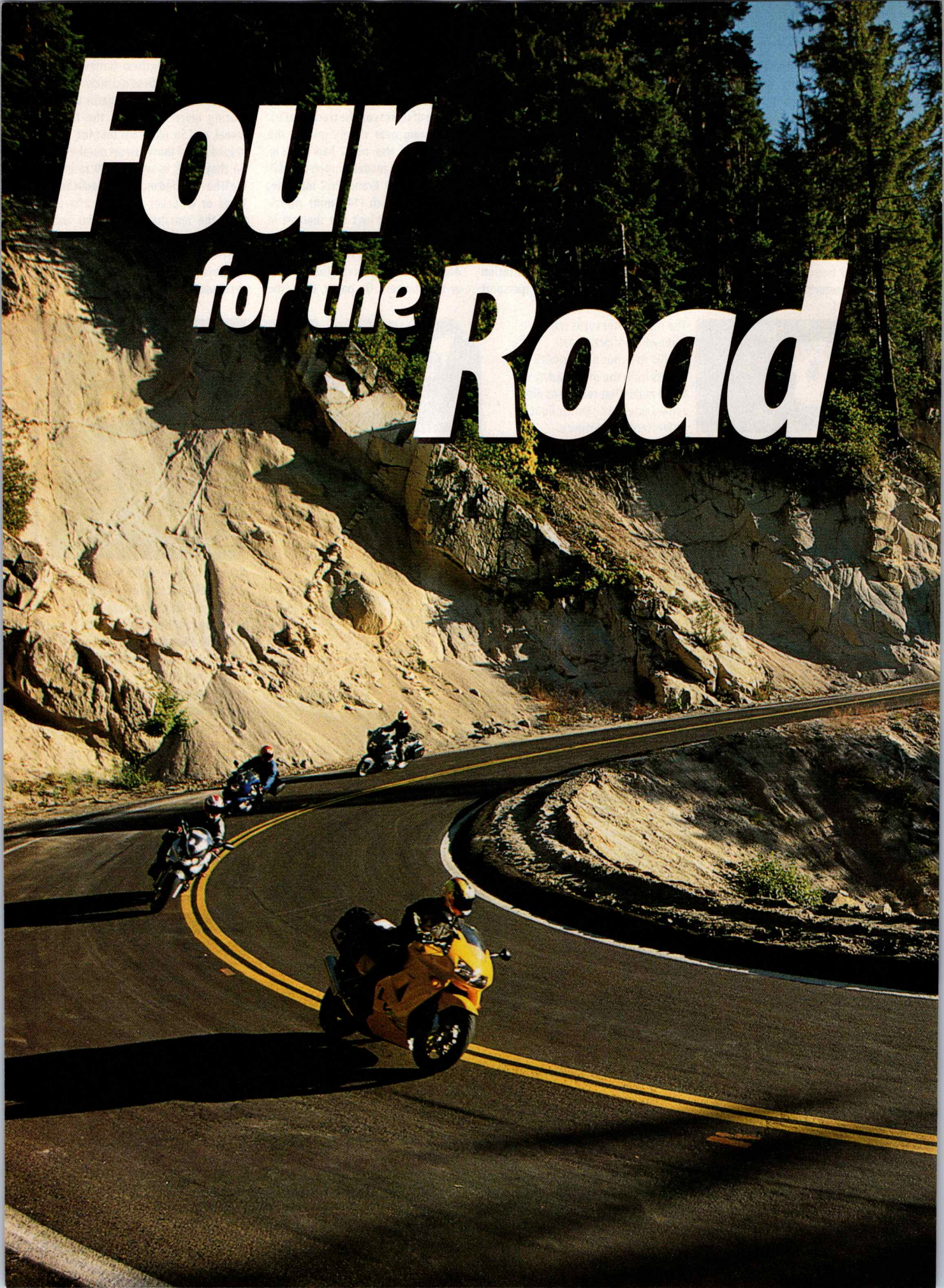


That new rear shock is aluminum instead of steel, with an improved heat compensation system for more consistent damping. You can adjust ride height at the top mount. The swingarm is longer than before, and carries a 180-section tire on a 5.5-inch wheel. Weight's even been cut from the 525 chain—thinner side plates.

ing up to 14,000 rpm and an indicated 154 mph just as you need to shift into sixth at the kink in the back straight.

Still, the GSX-R doesn't seem to have quite the rush-to-redline of the Yamaha R6 from 9000 rpm up. Is that because there's more midrange than the R6? We won't know 'til we get the thing here for a proper test, of course, but we *do* know the GSX-R pulls nice and clean from down around 4000 rpm; maybe lower, but I was scared to go any slower down the back straight with all those crazed sons of the Confederacy whipping past me. Ergos are great for racetrack use, though maybe not quite as street-friendly as the competition's 600cc offerings.

The latest in Suzuki's long line of warrior bikes is more than ready. Massive kudos to Suzuki for building things like it and for promoting grass-roots racing through its generous contingency program. MC


Four
for the Road

In which we answer a most obvious question: Do you really need a true sport-touring motorcycle to go sport touring?

By Marc Cook
Photography By Kevin Wing

NOT TOO MANY YEARS AGO, sport touring was more a concept than a market segment. If you were inclined to travel by secondary and tertiary roads at velocities high enough to keep your interest, you probably did so on whatever motorcycle was in your possession. As few as 15 years ago, a motorcycle tagged as a sport-tourer was likely to be a BMW or some large Japanese sportbike whose sporting capabilities had been called into question by the ultrafocused racetrack refugees just emerging. Likely as not, a bike widely considered an ST was an otherwise standard model fitted with a small fairing and luggage. The day of models carefully dissecting the strengths of a sport model and splicing them into a semitouring fold were well in the future.

That future has arrived, and you can count quite a few dedicated ST mounts: BMW continues to dominate with models like the K1200RS, R1100RS, R1100RT, R1100S and even—if you're nutty enough—the R1150GS. Buell posts the S3T as an ST, while Ducati's in the frame with the ST2 and ST4. Honda has the ST1100 and the VFR800F, and Kawasaki continues to sell the Concours. Triumph

BMW R1100RT

Suzuki Bandit 1200S

Honda VFR800F Interceptor

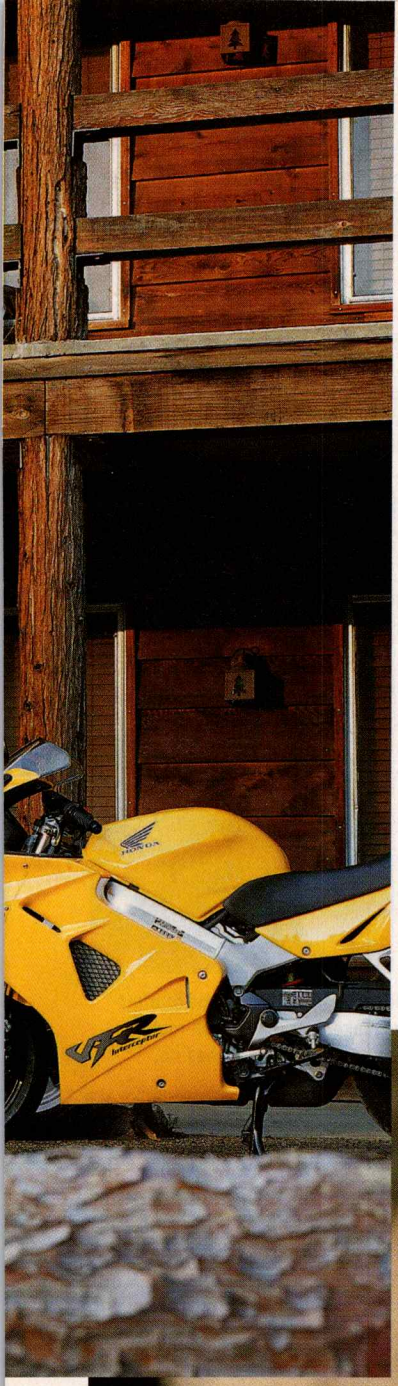
Yamaha YZF600R

has the Sprint ST (and RS). We mark Suzuki's Bandits and Katanas as STs, although they're really segment-straddlers.

That's all great if freedom-of-choice is what you want. But it's really not so clear-cut. Preternaturally attuned to our own surroundings, we began to notice that the bikes routinely departing the fumy *emap usa* parking garage on so-called sport-touring missions were hardly limited to STs. In fact, you'll see riders in the extended *Motorcyclist* family heading out on everything from CBR929RRs to Electra Glides. Which in turn lit a Bic lighter-sized flame under this kernel of an idea: What *is* a sport-touring bike, really? Or, do you need a dedicated ST to do the miles in reasonable comfort and speed?

To help answer the questions, we rounded up four motorcycles that represent the breadth of the sport-touring spectrum. On the touring end is the BMW R1100RT, a fully faired, Oilhead boxer that's been one of BMW's true sales successes. It stands in for similar bikes such as the Concours and ST1100. An ST sampler without the 800 Interceptor would be woefully incomplete, so there it is; the Honda fills in for models like the Buell S3T, Ducati ST2/4 and Sprint ST. Finally, two wild cards. The newly reworked Bandit 1200S, a half-faired lovable hunk of a motorcycle with semisporting pretensions that's really just a modern iteration of the Universal Japanese Motorcycle (UJM) of the beloved (or decried) 1970s and 1980s. Its spot could be taken by the Kawasaki ZRX1100 (or 1200R). And then you've got the Yamaha YZF600R, a terrific little motorcycle that's soundly (and unfortunately) overshadowed by the newer and more potent YZF-R6; it's standing in for the sportbikes just one notch removed from being too race-focused for this sort of work. For the YZF you might substitute the Honda CBR600F4 or the Kawasaki ZX-6R.

What are the most important attributes of a good sport-tourer? Glad you asked. We prioritize them this way: First, you need a comfortable ergonomic package (not necessarily Gold Wing-like) and a cushy seat as well as good (but not necessarily total) weather protection. Second, you'll want a motorcycle with decent range (fill-ups every 100 miles really get in the way) and an engine smooth enough to allow use of that range without pain killers. Third, we think you'll want a bike that can carry your overnight kit without bowing at the knees, which in turn means that it needs to accommodate soft luggage. Factory hard luggage is even better,



In fact, you'll see riders in the extended *Motorcyclist* family heading out on everything from CBR929RRs to Electra Glides.

Left: Our four contestants line up in front of the rustic Camp Nelson Lodge, located along California Highway 190, one of the nicest, twistiest and smoothest pieces of asphalt on the West Coast. Below: The BMW R1100RT rumbles down a section of that road, perfectly happy at a more relaxed pace.

but only the BMW comes so fitted.

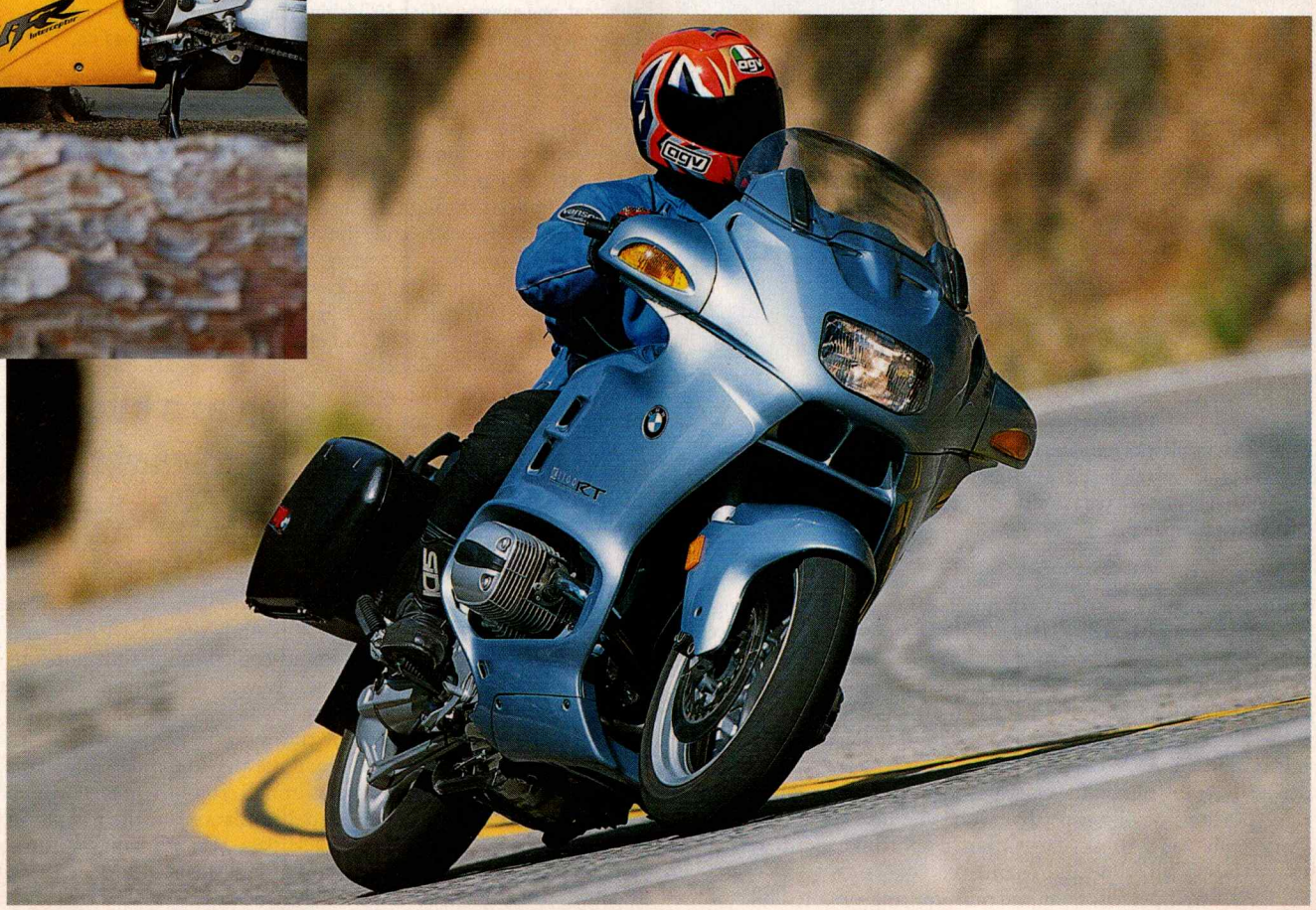
By the end of two days' riding, countless passes for the photographers and more seat switching than Formula 1 in silly season, we had a pretty good handle on this whole sport-touring thing.

BMW R1100RT
The Teutonic Hammock

We'll fess up right away—we chose the wrong BMW for this comparison. The firm's lighter, sportier R1100RS or R1100S models would have been better choices for the predominantly narrow, snaky roads encountered on our tour. Still, we found it interesting to see how this touring-slanted ST would perform in the midst of more hard-edged and sport-focused models.

Not too bad, actually. First of all, consider the Beemer's strengths. It has by far the best weather protection of the four bikes here, providing a veritable biodome of protection for rider and passenger, all without resorting to a garage-door-like fairing. An electrically adjustable windshield provides the flexibility to make riders (tall or short) happy behind the 'plex. It's the only one of this group with hard luggage available, and it's standard along with ABS, shaft drive and a height-adjustable seat. BMW has a firm notion of what a sport-touring bike ought to be, and the RT's execution shows the firm's clarity of thought. (You might not agree with the angle, but you can't fault BMW for following its instincts.)

On the parts of our tour that stuck to the interstates, the BMW proved to be well within its element. Suspension rates ideally calibrated for highway work allow the RT to glide over expansion joints and broken pavement, while the rider bemusedly watches the Suzuki and Yamaha buck and squirm. And even though the RT's steering is uncommonly light for a 643-pound motorcycle, it has an excellent sense of straight ahead.



Even as you begin to turn up the pace, the RT acts the willing partner. Those tall polished-aluminum handlebars exert tremendous leverage on BMW's trademark Telelever front suspension and cause the bike to heel over with just a whiff of grip effort. Better yet, the bike has neutral steering response; once leaned it tends to hold the lean angle without trying to stand up or fall in. (The Honda ST1100 that Kevin Smith brought along had a much greater tendency to fall into turns. See his account of our ordeal on page 41.) Given that the RT is quite tall, particularly so in this company, the view over the windshield is eyebrow-raising, with this mass of plastic plunging left and right with an alacrity completely out of place for its bulk.

On the parts of our tour that stuck to the interstates, the BMW proved to be well within its element.

About the time you're overrun with confidence and smugly suggesting to yourself that those tinny little sportbikes ain't got nothin' on this big rig, the road tightens and the others rip off into the distance. Blame it on physics. The RT wears touring-oriented Bridgestone BT-54s, not appreciably larger than the skins on the 172-pound-lighter Yamaha. As you approach the RT's modest cornering-clearance limits, the tires have long since begun telling you to cool your jets. Also, the low-effort steering has at this juncture lost much of its feedback, and the ABS-equipped Brembo brakes have become a tad difficult to modulate at the limit. The BMW's suspension tricks—antidive geometry up front and antijacking linkages out back—can't do anything for midcorner bumps, over which the RT sags, wallows and sends sparks flying.

BMW keeps its plastics suppliers working day and night with the RT, but the results include the best weather protection of these four by a long way. The adjustable seat is a tad too dished for our backsides and the bars could stand some trimming.

Although the 1085cc boxer makes 82.2 rear-wheel horsepower at 7250 rpm, you don't often zing the engine hard enough to get those numbers, thanks to obtrusive vibration and a quickly petering torque curve. What's more, the Beemer's five-speed gearbox leaves big gaps in the lower gears, so making time on the really tight portions of our trip (that would be most of it) was harder work than you'd think. So it's not a sportbike...did we expect otherwise? (Well, you can dream.)

Just as we suspected, then, the most touring-oriented bike of the lot is best at, ahem, touring. That's not to say the RT won't handle any tightly knotted piece of tarmac you throw at it, just that it won't wriggle along at an elevated pace without continually hinting that maybe it's time for a coffee break. Bikes with the emphasis on the second part of the sport-tour title are wonderful if you don't expect them to be sportbikes.

Yamaha YZF600R
The Rational Sportbike

In the cutthroat world of middleweight sportbikes, the state of the art remains stationary only for minutes, not years. A victim of this unstoppable march is Yamaha's current YZF600R, introduced in 1997 as the firm's top-line sporting middleweight only to be sent to the remainders bin by the hotter YZF-R6 in 1999. As have the other Big Four players, Yamaha has kept the YZF around essentially unchanged through 2001 as a B-level bike, a cost-conscious alternative to the R6 and the other front-row scratchers. At $6999, the Yamaha is the least expensive bike here by a scant $400, but it's less than half the cost of the BMW. What makes the YZF worthy of inclusion here is its real-world ergonomic package, smooth and torquey engine and class-leading weather protection.

Sportbike standard, circa 1997. Above-the-yoke clip-ons, wide and comfortable seat, and generous (for a 600) fairing make the YZF a true all-rounder. Once you get past the idea that it's not as sexy as an R6, you'll be fine.

Even as a budget middleweight, the YZF is a helluva performer. Thanks to its steel Deltabox frame, it's heavier than most leading 600s. At 471 pounds wet, the YZF is 46 pounds heavier than the R6 and 37 pounds heftier than the ZX-6R. But the Yamaha is the lightest of this ST quartet—by 54 pounds over the VFR—and feels it. Similarly, the Yamaha's liquid-cooled inline-four puts out 85.7 rear-wheel horsepower, which is well down from the star 600s; the R6 puts out 96.4 horses. But take a moment to overlay the YZF's horsepower and torque traces on the combatants in our 600 shootout last August and you'll see that the older Yamaha is as—or slightly more—powerful through 10,000 rpm, at which point the newer models pull ahead. Translation: In the real world of blind corners and sub-racetrack pace, the Yamaha's torque-laden engine is the treat, producing useful doses of urge without the need to hammer on the poor little beast.

Even as a budget middleweight, the YZF is a helluva performer.

Yamaha has mated this heartwarming engine to a chassis well conjured for the rapid sporty tour. Steering response is light but predictable and perfectly linear. Although the bike feels slightly bulky by current 600 standards, it's the featherweight of this group and as such seems remarkably nimble in this company. (Funny how these supposedly inferior sportbikes feel really good in isolation.) Fully adjustable suspension (the only bike here to have it, despite being the cheapest) allows you lots of latitude for set up, although we didn't stray far from the standard settings to get a ride that's reasonably plush on the highway yet well enough controlled that you can push the limits of the Bridgestone BT-57s' grip without drama.

All the things we love about 600s—that feeling of invincibility and sheer maneuverability—combine in the Yamaha with a roomy seating position, flat (if slightly soft) seat and low vibration levels for a truly comfortable package. The ergonomic setup is very close to that of the CBR-F4 and ZX-6R, and only marginally more cramped than the VFR's. You'll notice a bit of tingling at the footpegs, but otherwise the engine's tremors are well controlled.

You'd think, then, that the smallest, lightest bike here would be ill-suited to hitting the open road. Hardly. Although riders more than six feet tall may discover a kink in the knee or knot in the shoulder after a long day, the Yamaha proved amazingly comfortable for the rest of us. That chiseled fairing provides a useful pocket of still air, with just enough spilling over the windshield to take some weight off the wrists. Save for having the least amount of legroom of these four, the YZF proved it could do the distance thing without pretzelizing its rider.

We were pleased to observe that the Yamaha's sporting bias didn't detract from its sport-touring skills. Our only complaints, and they're small ones, are that the engine needs to be revved harder than any of the others in the group so that by the end of the day the "rpm buzz" is clearly felt, and that the high-ish exhaust pipe limits the size of saddlebags you can carry. Comfortable sportbikes are the bee's knees, giving you the chance to wring your adrenaline gland dry without bruising the rest of you.

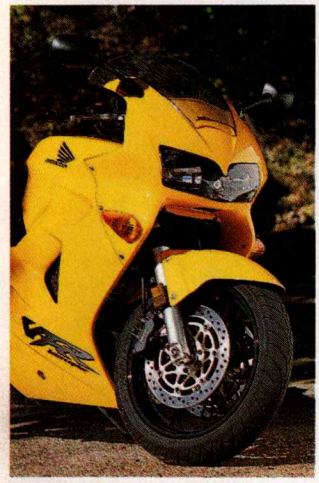
Honda VFR800F Interceptor

Directed Energies

Honda has a recipe for sport touring (several, actually, but this is the most sporting of them), and the VFR800F is that very specific vision made in metal. Evolved from the company's first true

V-four sportbike, today's Interceptor has been lauded as the ultimate fast-boy's ST, the perfect compromise between a true sportbike and something more amenable to long distances.

Every time we reacquaint ourselves with the VFR we're amazed by its overall capabilities and incredible levels of sophistication. Compared with earlier versions, the fuel-injected 800 is more rakish and extroverted, with a bit more low-frequency vibration coming through the pegs and some camminess evident. Original Honda V-fours were often likened to an electric motor, in both power delivery and persona. Well, maybe the new bike is like your washer hooked directly to the 220 tap; there's a lot more going on and you're the first to notice it.



This is the face of sport-touring as most of us know it. Fox eyes, medium-tall screen and an attempt at lower-body protection are hallmarks of the VFR's design. The seating position is just about perfect, right between the tightish Yamaha and the spread-out Suzuki.

...today's Interceptor has been lauded as the ultimate fast boy's ST, the perfect compromise between a true sportbike and something more amenable to long distances.

The Honda's engaging engine, though not quite as midrange-powerful as the earlier offerings, is nonetheless one of the best ST mills going. There's sufficient low-end urge to get the bike underway with no fuss, and the flat-lined midrange will allow you to surf along secondary roads looking at the scenery more than the tach. But it's not until you wind the engine up that it really starts to motivate the 525-pound package.

You get the sense, as the miles wear on, that Honda has labored with great diligence to keep the VFR from being too much the archetypal sportbike. (Part of the vision, or strategic wedging between it and the CBR series?) The suspension is plush almost to the point of distraction. Heavier and faster riders come away wanting slightly firmer springs and more aggressive damping to match. (Unfortunately, taking the opportunity to trim costs, Honda has chosen lower-rung suspension components, with the shock's rebound settings the only external damping adjustment.) Unless you're overly smooth, the VFR will bob and pitch during really fast riding, particularly on very tight roads where the bike feels as though it hesitates between direction changes as the suspension settles down. Honda's efforts to ensure a sublime freeway ride may have gone a bit too far.

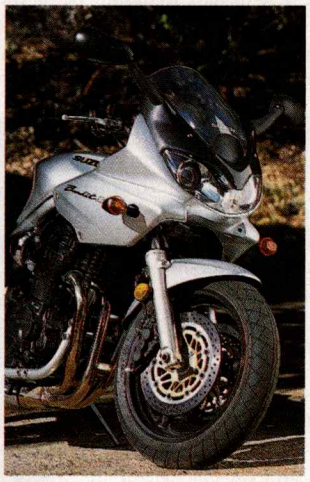
Honda also has a notion that it could and should make motorcycles safer for the masses, hence the linked braking system. You've heard plenty about this setup before: The hand lever activates four of the six front pucks and one of the three rears while the pedal pins the remaining pistons. In between are gizmos like delay and proportioning valves that would seem in place on Apollo 11. Down here on Earth, the system works surprisingly well, although several of our riders complained of non-linear activation. Still, the bottom line when you grab the lever and stomp the pedal is quick and sure stopping power—and *right now.*

The VFR's accommodations are first-rate. A semisporting riding position that actually tapes out closer to the YZF than the standard-format Bandit is at the heart of the VFR's old-blue-jeans fit. You stretch slightly to the fixed clip-ons and find the pegs a comfortable distance from your glutes, which are in turn positively coddled by the broad saddle. Staring back from the pebble-grained dash are crisp instruments, a clock, fuel gauge and outside-air temperature monitor. Look into the mirrors and (imagine this!) there's the world behind you.

While it's difficult to justify calling a 100-horsepower cush missile dull, that's just the title some of our riders applied to the VFR. For those of us with poorly calibrated Sophist-O-Meters, the Interceptor's silken demeanor, its very butlerlike, how-can-I-help-you? attitude can be a mite off-putting. For others—and you know who you are—the Honda VFR's indifference to showing effort is exactly what makes the bike so enticing. Honda's vision of the ultimate sport-tourer may not be your vision, but it's a bout of suspension improvement away from clasping in its maw the taillights of full-strength sportbikes.

Suzuki Bandit 1200S
The Rekindled UJM

Park these four bikes side-by-side and it's the Suzuki Bandit that stands out. Which one of these is not like the others? Well, that would be the big silver lug with the bug-eyed fairing and all that exposed stuff in the middle that kinda looks like an engine.



Like the looks or not, the Bandit 1200S's half fairing pokes a mighty hole in the atmosphere, providing a surprising amount of protection. Wide mirrors on wiggly shafts make blurry pictures, but the rest of the cockpit environment is first rate.

Even the big-and-tall BMW seems as a type with the Honda and Yamaha in having the right pieces to nudge aside the atmosphere at highway speeds and glide effortlessly along our nation's less-traveled roads. The Bandit is the Boston lawyer in the singles bar, thrusting forward on conviction and *chutzpah.* Outta my way, weenies.

me tested:

You *Can* Take It With You

BMW System Cases

BMW follows tradition with hefty System Cases for the R1100RT. (They're standard on the RT and optional on the GS, R, RS and S models.) The hard-plastic cases are water-tight, as long as the shells aren't closed on some of your wares, and come off the bike with an easy tug. Our main complaint is that they make the bike really wide; an issue mainly in town, of course. You can buy the shallower City lids (shown here) that sacrifice capacity for slenderness. Pricey...you bet, but all factory luggage should be this good.

PRICE: $690
RATING: ★★★★★
VERDICT: *Fine-fitting but expensive; the must-have BMW option*
BMW: www.bmwonline.com

RKA SuperSport

RKA's SuperSport magnetic tank bag was used on our tour, accompanied by a set of SuperSport 33-liter saddlebags. Installation was straightforward utilizing nylon straps and hook-and-loop closures to secure the bags. They fit the big-boned Bandit well, clearing the bodywork and pipe with ease and perching upon the slightly humped tank without a hitch. The tank bag expands from six liters to 16, and it's not too tippy when loaded. The saddlebags have a zipper/hook-and-loop closure and fleecelike material on the backsides to protect bodywork. For light-packers, the RKA pieces provided enough room for a multiday trip.

PRICE: $130 (tank bag), $185 (saddlebags)
RATING: ★★★★½
VERDICT: *Tidy and strong; a good choice for the light-packer*
RKA LUGGAGE: (800) 349-1-RKA, www.rka-luggage.com

B Bags Speed Pack

Imported from Germany by Chase Harper, the Speed Pack is a large combination saddlebag/tail pack intended for sportbikes. The bags (which have lots of clearance for upswept pipes) are accessible from the side and flat on top. The tail pack mounts securely to the side bags, and wide straps with metal buckles hold everything to the bike. The tail pack boasts loads of room—expandable even from what is shown here—without being obtrusive, and we were impressed with the solidity of the mounting system. Our only complaint stems from the smallish size of the bags—which are even more cramped when the internal waterproof sacks are used—and their awkward access flaps.

PRICE: $339.95
RATING: ★★★★½
VERDICT: *Sturdy and large bags great for a solo long trip*
CHASE HARPER: (877) 965-7977, www.chaseharper.com

Wolfman Millennium Series

Wolfman's Millennium tankbags and saddlebags are noteworthy for their heavy ballistic-nylon construction and obvious care of manufacture. The 16-liter (expanded) Wolf Mag tank bag shows lots of clever features, including a mesh inner pocket, a small change pocket at the rear, and a thin upper pocket beneath the removable map case that's accessible from outside the bag. This is perfect for keeping your credit cards away from the powerful magnets that secure the bag. A tough rubberlike pad on the bottom helps prevent scratching. The diminutive Hi-Pipe saddlebags (just 11 liters each) handle a decent load without distortion, perfect for a weekender.

PRICE: $109.99 (tank bag), $129.99 (saddlebags)
RATING: ★★★★½
VERDICT: *Compact and beautifully made; the sport tourer's pick*
WOLFMAN: (800) 535-8131, www.wolfmanluggage.com

Like the guy in the black suit with big shoulder pads, the Bandit looks big. Actually, it may be wearing lifts, because it's a measly 18 pounds heavier than the VFR. (Should Honda feel shame for stuffing its aluminum-framed wonderbike with too many gadgets, or should Suzuki be prideful in making a steel-framed, previous-generation-engined brute so svelte?) On that note, the Suzuki's wheelbase is actually shorter than the Honda's by 0.4 inches and just 0.6 inches longer than the Yamaha's, while the Bandit's steering geometry is marginally racier than the VFR's, albeit with notably more trail. From the saddle, the Bandit feels significantly heavier and less wieldy than the Honda, although the Suzuki is a paragon of stability even on rain grooves and uneven pavement.

Frankly, we're amazed that Suzuki can put together a package this good for just $7399. The brakes are fine—softer pads up front would take away some of the wood at the lever—and the suspension works especially well. Overall, the Bandit is not as compliant as the Honda, but deals with big-whoop surprises better than the Yamaha.

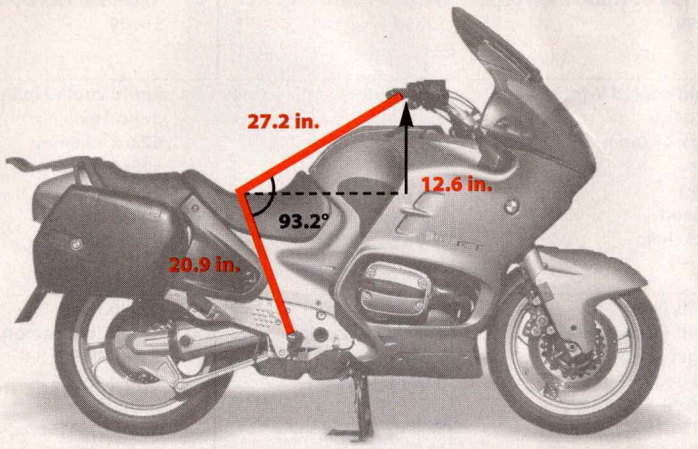
An ergonomic package right from the UJM playbook gives you every opportunity to compensate for the suspension's occasionally rough-edged behavior on ragged pavement. As you'll see in Ergonomics Explained, the Bandit has the greatest legroom next to the BMW and a modest reach to a tubular handlebar that has nearly three inches more effective rise than the Honda's bars. Posture watchers will notice that the Suzuki offers a slightly more upright position than the Honda, but still gives you the opportunity to lean forward into the slight breeze that gets around the controversially styled half-fairing.

The message from Suzuki is torque, laid out by an engine whose roots don't go far into the soil to find the original GSX-R1100....

Going on about the Suzuki's chassis comportment is like rating Madonna on her scrambled eggs. The message from Suzuki is torque, laid out by an engine whose roots don't go far into the soil to find the original GSX-R1100, circa 1986. By now, the air- and oil-cooled engine is technologically old hat, too much weight and bulk, not enough design headroom...you name it. Somebody forgot to tell the Bandit. This engine delivers everything you want and need from a big-bore four. Ease away from stoplights with the slightest of clutch slips and no more throttle movement than you need to take the slack out of the wire. The Bandit oozes ahead. Snap the upshift at 3000 rpm and before you know it you're in fourth or fifth; you could stay there all day.

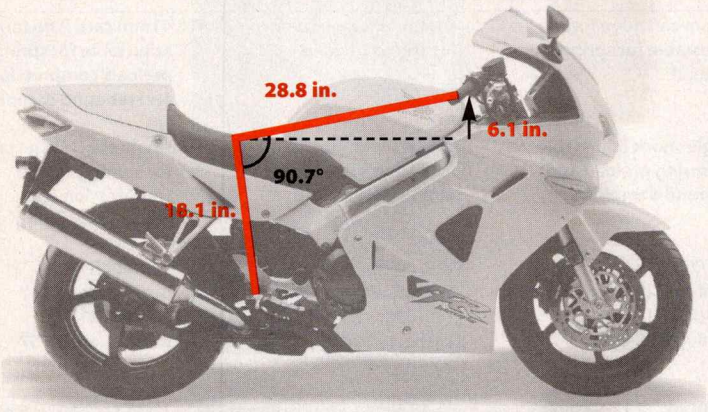
Dare we suggest that a low-blood-sugar engine is the better deal for an ST? Indeed we do. At the end of the day, the less time you have to worry about the engine—Is that gear right, can I make this set of corners without a downshift?—the more your concentration can go into scanning the road, reading the surface and checking the map to see how badly you're lost. With more than 100 horses on call (and more than 72 foot-pounds of torque at all of 4250 rpm) you can still leave darkies at the exit and loft the front wheel contemptuously over logs in the road, rogue beavers, what have you.

It's just the Suzuki's split personality (hooliganistic when you want, otherwise perfectly mellow) mated to an ergonomic and convenience package to shame much more expensive and supposedly superior bikes that sustained our scratch fights for the Bandit's keys. In the hour of continuing specialization, the outsized Suzuki's casual competence at flying down unfamiliar backroads or snoozing along a patch of this country's finest highway is a huge and thrilling surprise. What's more, it returns us to the idea that traveling comfortably on a motorcycle in no way requires specialized tools. If do-everything motorcycles like the Bandit continue to be so competent (and such a good value), we might find that the day of models carefully dissecting the strengths of a sport model and splicing them into a semitouring fold has come and gone.



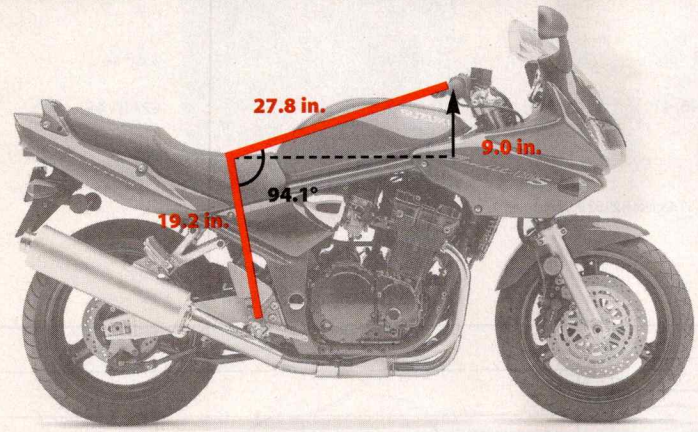
BMW R1100RT

Sit up and beg...goood boy! BMW believes in a particular kind of upright posture, and the RT delivers it undiluted. The tall bars have an effective rise of 12.6 inches, among the highest we've measured, which also helps create a short reach to the grips. Although the pegs provide a decent amount of legroom, as you can see by the 93.2-degree included angle, they're quite far forward. As a result, you sit with nearly all your weight on your tailsection. If it were ours, we'd drop the bars a couple of inches and slide the pegs back a smidgen. But that's just us.



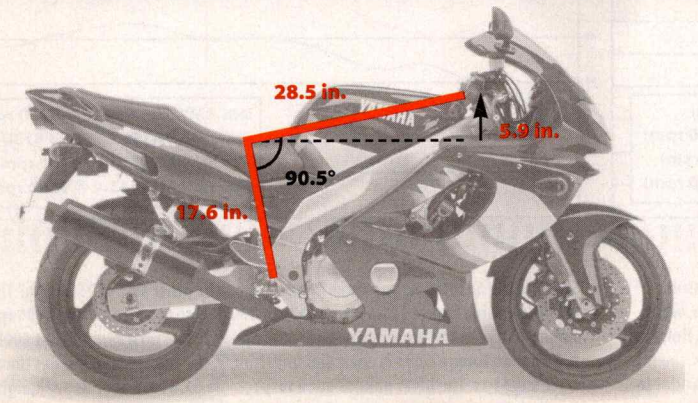
Honda VFR800F Interceptor

On the road, the Interceptor feels usefully roomier than the Yamaha, and the numbers tell you why. With 0.5-inch additional legroom and a more open seating angle (partly created by the 0.2-inch-taller bar rise) over the YZF, the Honda has just enough additional squirm room to make the long-of-limb welcome. We think this is the ideal sport-touring configuration because your weight is distributed evenly among wrists, feet and butt, yet the bike allows room to tuck down behind the windscreen or hang off without restriction.



Suzuki Bandit 1200S

What do you get when you cross the RT's touring ergos with the Honda's more compact dimensions? Would you believe a Bandit 1200S? (Maybe it all went the other way, diverging from the UJM.) The Bandit's nine-inch effective bar rise puts most riders in a semi-upright position, with more weight being carried by the backside than on the Honda or the Yamaha. The relatively short reach to the bars is disguised by the large fairing poking out well ahead of the bike; from the saddle, the Bandit feels bigger and longer than it is.



Yamaha YZF600R

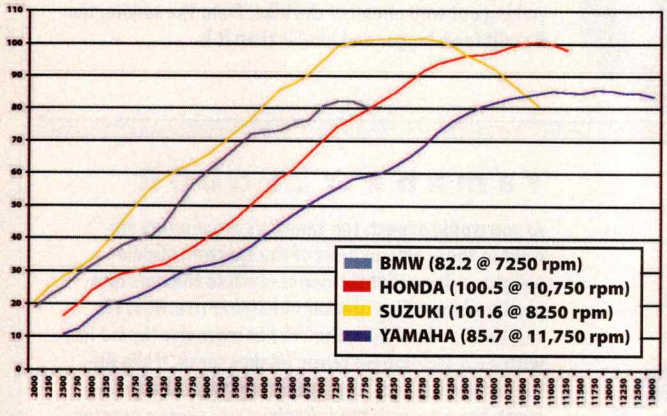
As you would expect, the Yamaha's ergonomics are right in there among most of the sporting middleweights, with a slightly longer reach to the bars compensated for with a greater handlebar rise. Next to, say, the Honda CBR-F4, the YZF has more rise (by 0.7 in.) with a 0.7-inch-longer reach. (Makes sense. If the distance from the seat to the steering stem is held constant, the bike with the taller bars will show a greater distance from the seat to the bars.) Next to the others in this group, the Yamaha has 0.5-inch less legroom and the tightest seating angle, an indication that the pegs are more tucked up under you than on the other bikes.

Specifications

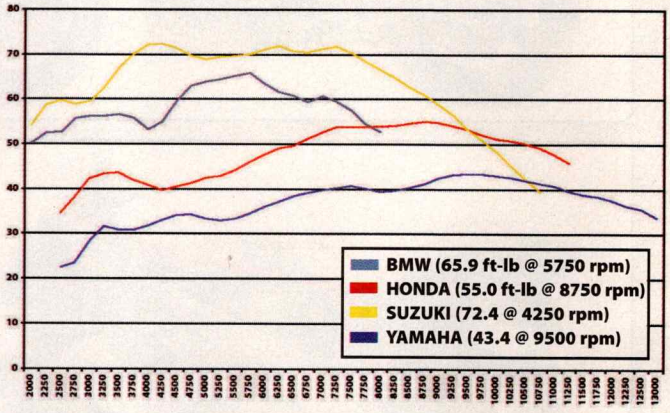
	BMW R1100RT	Honda VFR800 Interceptor	Suzuki Bandit 1200S	Yamaha YZF600R
MSRP	$15,990	$9499	$7399	$6999
ENGINE				
Type	air-cooled opposed-twin	liquid-cooled V-four	air/oil-cooled inline-four	liquid-cooled inline-four
Valve arrangement	sihc, 8v	dohc,16v	dohc, 16v	dohc, 16v
Bore x stroke	99.0 x 70.5mm	72.0 x 48.0mm	79.0 x 59.0mm	62.0 x 49.6mm
Displacement	1085cc	781cc	1157cc	599cc
Compression ratio	10.7:1	11.6:1	9.5:1	12.0:1
Transmission	5-speed	6-speed	5-speed	6-speed
Final drive	shaft	#525 chain	#530 chain	#520 chain
CHASSIS				
Weight	643 lb. (wet) 603 lb. (tank empty)	525 lb. (wet) 492 lb. (tank empty)	543 lb. (wet) 511 lb. (tank empty)	471 lb. (wet) 441 lb. (tank empty)
Fuel capacity	6.6 gal. (25L)	5.5 gal. (21L)	5.3 gal. (20L)	5.0 gal. (19L)
Rake/trail	27.2 deg./4.8 in. (122mm)	25.5 deg./3.7 in. (95mm)	25.3 deg./4.1 in. (104mm)	25.0 deg./3.8 in. (97mm)
Wheelbase	58.5 in. (1485mm)	56.7 in. (1440mm)	56.3 in. (1430mm)	55.7 in. (1415mm)
Seat height	30.7–32.2 in. (780–820mm)	31.7 in. (805mm)	31.1 in. (790mm)	31.7 in. (805mm)
SUSPENSION				
Front	single shock	46mm cartridge fork adjustable for spring preload	43mm fork adjustable for spring preload	41mm cartridge fork adjustable for spring preload, compression and rebound damping
Rear	single shock adjustable for spring preload and rebound damping	single shock adjustable for spring preload and rebound damping	single shock adjustable for spring preload and rebound damping	single shock adjustable for spring preload, compression and rebound damping
Tire, front	120/70ZR17 Bridgestone BT54	120/70ZR Dunlop D204	120/70ZR17 Michelin Macadam 90X	120/60ZR17 Bridgestone BT57
Tire, rear	160/60ZR18 Bridgestone BT54	180/55ZR17 Dunlop D204	180/55ZR17 Michelin Macadam 90X	160/60ZR17 Bridgestone BT57
PERFORMANCE				
Corrected 1/4-mile*	12.70 sec. @ 105.8 mph	11.14 sec. @ 122.2 mph	11.15 sec. @ 121.79 mph	11.31 sec. @ 118.9 mph
0–60 mph	n/a	n/a	2.97 sec.	n/a
0–100 mph	n/a	n/a	7.46 sec.	n/a
Top-gear roll-on, 60–80 mph	n/a	5.23 sec.	4.02 sec.	4.86 sec.
Fuel mileage (low/high/average)	40/55/45	37/46/41	34/49/42	42/49/45
Cruising range (excluding reserve)	252	192	181	191

*Performance with test-session weather conditions corrected to sea-level standard conditions (59 degrees F, 29.92 in. of mercury)

HORSEPOWER



TORQUE



DYNO CHAT: **Proof that displacement is your friend. The Suzuki's unstressed engine pounds out a mere 101.6 hp max (just 1.1 hp more than the Honda, which is 376cc smaller) but is right at 100 hp for a nearly 2000-rpm-wide spread. Honda's V-four has to work harder, but hangs on well up top. The dyno reflects how the bike feels: revvy but not all that grunty. The Yamaha's trace doesn't look spectacular in this company, but it's meatier than the current 600 stars in the midrange.**

See how the Suzuki's torque curve peters out on the other side of 7500 rpm? That's why the engine makes 101.6 hp, not 120 or 130. It also has an amazing 4000 rpm spread between the horsepower and torque peaks. Save for a slight dip at 4000 rpm, the Honda's torque curve is enviable; surprisingly, the engine feels livelier than this trace suggests. The BMW pounds out a respectable 65.9 foot-pounds peak, right where you'll use it most often.

The All-Reason ST

Maybe it's a life-stage thing. Or perhaps I just had a run of riding duties that played to its strengths. But Honda's unglamorous ST1100 has won a new fan. Nothing else offers its degree of long-range luxury while still swinging through switchbacks like motorcycles are supposed to. And isn't that the very essence of a sport-tourer? It has to be responsive and agile in the turns, and not feel like a two-wheeled Buick, and yet be so accommodating and relaxing in cruise mode that you never want to stop. In fact, the ST is more than just a sport-tourer. Look past its 700-pound weight, its decade-old technology and its passionless styling to see a perfect bike to choose when you want to enjoy motorcycling, and you have nothing to prove by your specific choice of motorcycle. ***—Kevin Smith***

Cheers & Jeers

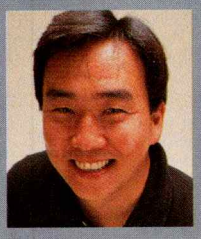
	BIKE/SCORE				
	BMW	HONDA	SUZUKI	YAMAHA	VERDICT
Engine	6	9	10	8	*RT's too cobbly, Bandit's understressed GSX-R engine is an easy-going brute. The Honda is nearly seamless*
Drivetrain	6	9	9	8	*You'd expect a better BMW gearbox for $16,000, Honda has just the right balance of slickness and feedback*
Handling	7	9	8	9	*Honda's package is the best compromise, the Yamaha's noticeably sportier, while the Bandit fails to feel old*
Braking	8	8	7	10	*The YZF takes unanimous top honors, BMW's standard ABS deserves mention for the all-weather traveler*
Ride	9	9	7	9	*VFR's is controlled cush, while the Yamaha provides excellent control at more sporting calibration*
Ergonomics	7	9	10	8	*Can't hardly beat the standard for all-day comfort. Honda and Yamaha acquit themselves very well*
Features	9	9	8	7	*BMW and VFR are rife with them, while the Suzuki's new instruments help close the gap*
Refinement	5	10	9	8	*The Honda, hands down. It's smooth, silky and sophisticated. If you want an attitude, take the Bandit*
Value	5	8	10	9	*Suzuki's so inexpensive it hurts, while the YZF is also a good deal. The RT is for wealthier Beemerphiles*
Fun factor	5	8	9	8	*Two churches: Believe in high character (Bandit) or utter sophistication (VFR)... it's your choice*
Overall*	6	9	9	8	*Bandit does so much so well we're tired of saying it, but the VFR and YZF can please the sporting type, too*

*Overall rating is independent and not derived from category scores.

Off the Record

kai

Age: 30
Height: 5 ft. 4 in.
Weight: 145 lb.
Inseam: 28 in.
Longest Tour: One lap of Oahu



I've got to admit, long-distance riding has never appealed to me much. The thought of traveling for long stretches—even on twisty roads—seems like a lot of work. (I'm from Hawaii, after all.) But after spending a few days on this quartet of sporty tourers, I think I understand the whole sport-touring thing a little better now. You BMW vets know this, but the RT is a very different kind of animal. The engine rocks left-to-right, the windshield moves up and down (kinda cool, actually), and the turn-signal switches... well, they're pretty funky. Cook said I looked like a dog with peanut butter stuck to the roof of its mouth after getting off the thing and I felt like it! I guess BMWs must be an acquired taste. ***—Garrett Kai***

trevitt

Age: 35
Height: 5 ft. 9 in.
Weight: 140 lb.
Inseam: 32 in.
Longest Tour: Quebec to B.C. via snowmobile

I was pleasantly surprised during this test to find just how wide the sport-touring spectrum can be. At the sport end, the YZF600 is still comfortable enough to ride all day; opposite that, the BMW R1100 is much more nimble than I had anticipated. If I had to pick one of these four, it would be the VFR800—almost sporty enough for my tastes, yet a bit roomier and more powerful than the YZF for those times the wife comes along. Ideally though, I'd want a big-bore noncurrent sportbike—comfy and strong enough for two people and luggage, but fun enough for those solo overnighters. ***—Andrew Trevitt***

boehm

Age: 38
Height: 6 ft.
Weight: 225 lb.
Inseam: 32 in.
Longest Tour: Chicago to L.A. on Route 66

I hate to ramble on about something I've beaten like a gong in these very pages, but the Interceptor is simply the best all-around sporty bike on the planet. The thing's got a can-do list as long as a compilation of Al Gore "exaggerations," and that's saying something. The throbby feel and sound of its V-four injects loads of character into what's gotta be the most seamless machine around, and the bike remains unique aesthetically despite the "trying too hard" yellow color Honda gave it for 2000. The surprise of the group? Yamaha's YZF600R. I'd forgotten how damn good it is: way comfortable, every bit as powerful as the top-shelf 600s up to 10,000 revs, a capable handler, and a bargain to boot. Good stuff.

—Mitch Boehm

2001 Suzuki SV650S

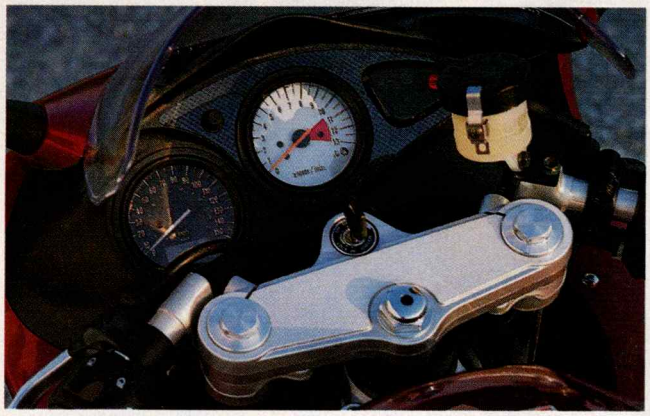
SV to SV-S: Small changes in specification, big differences in personality By Marc Cook. Photography By Kevin Wing

YOU CAN'T BLAME AMERICAN SUZUKI FOR TAKING A CAUTIOUS approach with the SV650. After all, the last few unfaired, medium-displacement V-twins to be offered here were abject sales failures, linoleum-hugging, back-of-the-shop embarrassments. Remember the Honda Hawk GT? Wonderful motorcycle, underpowered and perhaps a bit pricey (just $500 less than the CBR600F of the time) and a stone at the dealership. It has become a posthumous success for the minimalist cult. Or how about Honda's earlier VT500 Ascot, or Yamaha's XV920 or XZ550 Vision or Suzuki's VX800? None of these naked V-twins ever seriously challenged the entrenched inline-fours, and all failed to have more than a couple years of staying power. Japan hoped, America yawned.

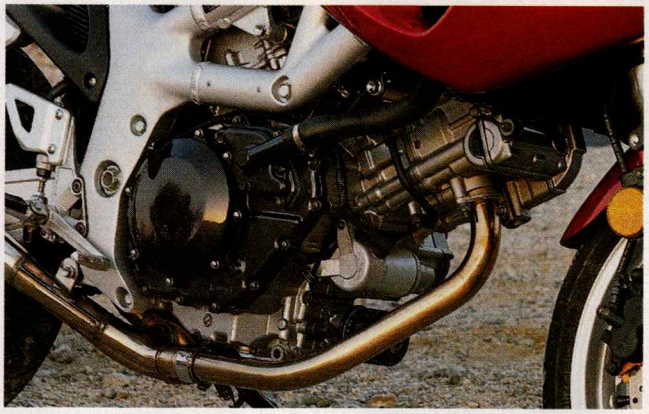
But the SV650's a different deal. Maybe it's the right time for a lightweight V-twin, or maybe it's just the packaging and price-point of this particular motorcycle. Doesn't matter. The SV's been a huge success. Halfway through its first year, the SV's popularity had reached fever pitch and even in the 2000 model year some customers were having trouble finding a bike. And SVs are cluttering up racetracks across the country, teaching a new generation about power slides and—sometimes—high sides.

Maybe the sales traumas of the earlier V-twins explain why Suzuki has—until now—played a conservative game, bringing us only the

ROAD TEST



The frame-mounted half fairing provides a binnacle for clean and simple gauges. Clip-on handlebars are more than five inches lower than the standard SV's and help transform the bike's character.



Bathed in dark gray paint on the SV-S, the 645cc eight-valve V-twin is otherwise unchanged from the naked SV's. Broad in powerband and full of character, it's sweet.

least expensive version of the SV. At the SV's launch, two bikes were unveiled, the familiar naked SV and a slightly different model with a TL1000S-esque half-fairing, lower bars, slightly rearset pegs and incrementally taller final-drive gearing. The SV650S debuted in Europe, but the closest Americans got to it was across our northern border. Real close, for some; a notable number of would-be SV owners wanted the S version badly enough to bring Canadian models here, going through the hassle of importation and instrument demetrification.

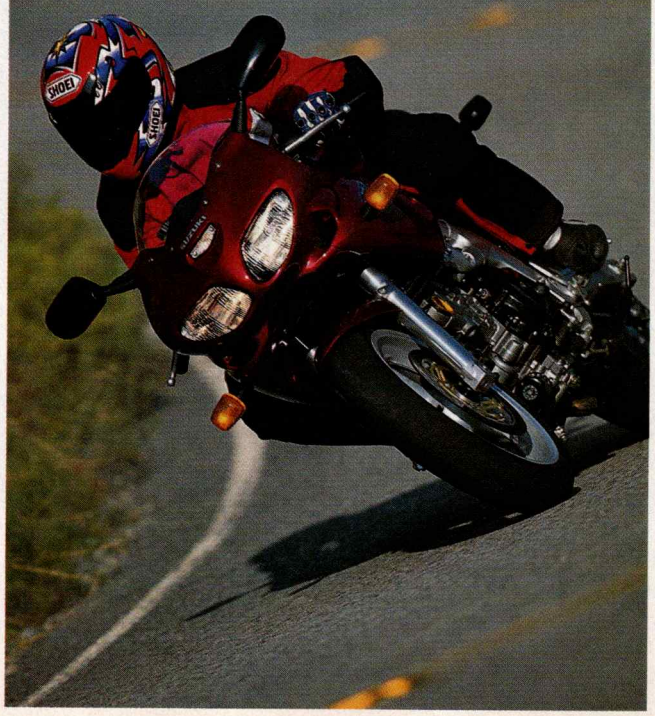
If you follow the world of SV riders and owners you'll notice a rash of for-sale signs hung over the headlamps of the naked models as anticipation of the SV650S coming to America turned into elation—and ultimately a decision to step up to the half-faired version. Will these owners be happy in their decision to trade up? Or will the naked-model stalwarts have the last laugh?

It depends. At $6199, the S is $400 more than the standard SV, which returns unchanged for 2001 save for a $50 price hike. On the surface, it seems the S owner will get few spec-sheet bragging rights over an SV rider. The standard SV's tubular bar is replaced with aluminum clip-ons located just beneath the upper triple clamp. The footpeg carriers place the pegs about 30mm further rearward and 5mm higher than the standard-SV pieces. Otherwise it's the same engine, same chassis and the same wheels (painted silver, as were the 1999 model's) as the SV we've come to know and love.

Except that, as a whole, it's not the same motorcycle. Pardon the digression, but just as the standard SV650 owes more than a little to the Ducati Monster—yes, there's the 90-degree V-twin, the trellis-style frame, the upright riding position—the new SV-S in turn acts and feels much like a miniaturized Ducati 900SS. Hold on—this'll make sense in a minute. While the standard SV (like the Monster) is the consummate urban brawler, a lean-and-mean motorcycle that encourages you to violate traffic laws and frighten pedestrians at every turn, the SV-S (like the 900SS) is more like a proper sportbike, smoother and more polished and, we dare suggest, a lot less likely to make you want to jump the curb in front of the Krispy Kreme or toss it around like a low-slung Super Motard bike.

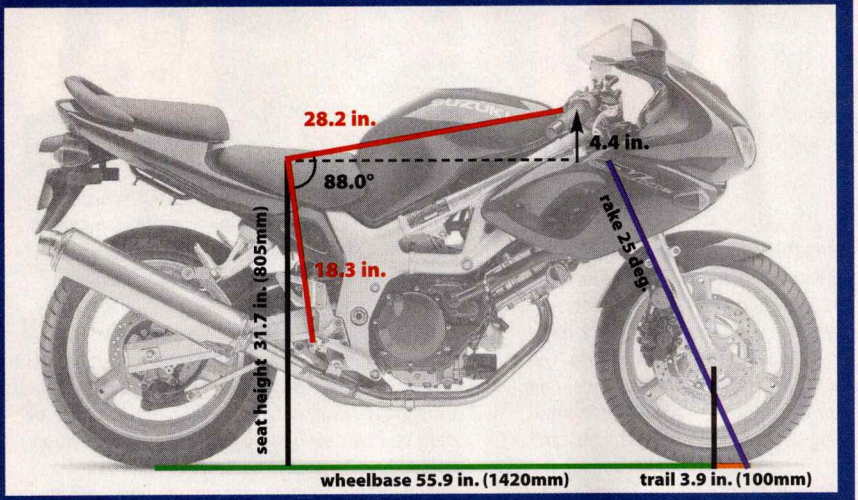
It's all in the S-model's ergonomics package. In replacing the SV's tubular bar with clip-ons, Suzuki placed the S's grips one inch closer together, about five inches lower and just less than an inch further forward. Footpegs set higher and rearward complete the picture. What's more, the S-model's slim half-fairing creates an entirely different picture than the standard SV's asymmetrical instrument cluster and exposed headlamp. From the perch, the SV-S feels slim and slightly long (you'll notice this more if you come from the slightly thick-set 600 supersport bikes than fresh from a ride on the normal SV), and delectably light. Claimed weight difference is just nine pounds more than the unfaired version; we measured the bike at 428 pounds full of gas.

...there's never any question about the surface of the road, the degree of steering input the tire will tolerate, or the amount of braking you can get away with.



You'd think that some minor juggling of the ergonomics would result in, well, some minor differences in the way the bikes feel. Sorry, next contestant. We're amazed how different the two bikes feel. Again, the naked SV, putting you in a more upright position, begs to be slapped around, thrust into the corner and run in hard on the brakes. The S is much more sedate. While the standard SV feels punchy, with a rearward weight bias that encourages—and often flat-out causes—wheelies and makes you occasionally wonder exactly what's going on with that

Suzuki SV650S



MSRP $6199
Warranty ..... 12 months, unlimited miles
Colors ..... red, blue

ENGINE

Type ..... liquid-cooled 90-degree V-twin
Valve arrangement .. dohc, 8v
Bore x stroke ..... 81.0 x 62.6mm
Displacement 645cc
Compression ratio ... 11.5:1
Carburetion ..... two 39mm Mikuni constant velocity
Transmission 6-speed
Final drive ..... #525 chain

CHASSIS

Frame ..... trellis style aluminum
Weight ..... 428 lb. (wet) 404 lb. (fuel tank empty)
Fuel capacity ..... 4.2 gal. (16L)

Suspension, front ... 41mm fork
Suspension, rear .... single shock adjustable for spring preload
Brake, front ..... dual two-piston calipers, 310mm discs
Brake, rear ..... two-piston caliper, 240mm disc
Tire, front ..... 120/60ZR17 Metzeler ME-Z4
Tire, rear ..... 160/60ZR17 Metzeler ME-Z4

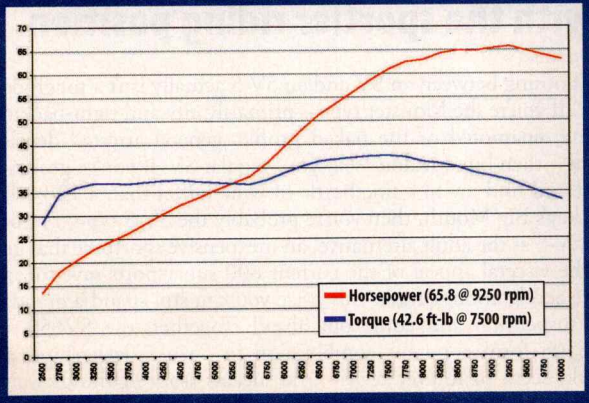
details, details...

- Tidy instrument panel includes dual trip-meters and dual-mode low-fuel light
- Mirrors wide enough and clear
- Six-way adjustable front-brake lever
- Burgeoning aftermarket gives you the chance to go wild
- Easy to maintain, cheap to insure
- Comes with a fan club

PERFORMANCE

Corrected 1/4-mile* .. 12.6 sec. @ 109.4 mph
0-60 mph ..... 3.94 sec.
0-100 mph ..... 10.66 sec.
Top-gear roll-on, 60-80 mph ..... 5.13 sec.

Power to weight ratio** ..... 9.09 lb/hp
Fuel mileage (low/high/average) 33/46/42
Cruising range (exc. reserve) ..... 139 miles



test notes

- Speedo error: 60 mph; actual 56
- That's what a V-twin's all about: a broad, flat torque curve. In horsepower and torque, the SV whomps the current 600cc supersports from idle to 8000 rpm.

*Performance with test-session weather conditions corrected to sea-level standard conditions (59 degrees F, 29.92 in. of mercury)

**Wet weight plus 170 lb. rider divided by measured horsepower

Cheers & Jeers

SUZUKI SV650S

Engine	9	Smooth, effortless and well-mannered
Drivetrain	8	Typically good Suzuki; clutch a bit abrupt
Handling	8	Accurate steering, superb feedback
Braking	8	Generally peachy but rear lacks feel
Ride	7	Bargain suspension not supple or refined
Ergonomics	9	Tidy riding position improves the SV
Features	8	Simplified bike excused by low price
Refinement	8	Save for suspension, really well done
Value	10	A Ducati 900SS on a boxboy's budget
Fun Factor	9	More grown up than naked SV, still fun

verdict: *Suzuki's improved one of our favorite bikes without killing its personality or value. You'll be seeing lots of these terrorizing back roads—or racetracks—on Sunday afternoons.*

front tire, the S's more forward bias completely changes the feedback.

On fast yet still twisty roads, the altered personality is most evident. Feel from the front tire is superb; there's never any question about the surface of the road, the degree of steering input the tire will tolerate, or the amount of braking you can get away with. Your palms will be alive with this data on the SV-S, and you'll be cajoled to increase your cornering speed and smooth your inputs to achieve graceful arcs through even complicated switchbacks. The standard SV? It's pestering you to stuff it in harder and flick it on its side, and who's to care what all this looks like from behind? We're having fun here, bub. Intellect vs. emotion.

When the road tightens you'll still be enjoying yourself, regardless of which model you just bought. Yes, the handlebar'd SV flicks with alacrity, but the SV-S is hardly a train. Both bikes share 25-degree steering head angles and 3.9 inches of trail, numbers quite conservative by 600 supersport standards. Supposedly, the SV-S rides on a 10mm-shorter wheelbase than the SV; even that's 5mm longer than the TL1000S's wheelbase. Lightning-fast direction changes aren't in the cards for either SV, but the S has noticeably slower reflexes. As a payback, the SV-S is extremely hard to provoke into headshake shenanigans or any of the headstock quivers that become part of a YZF-R6 rider's life.

This relaxed chassis personality meshes perfectly with the cadence from the SV's 645cc V-twin. Churning out about 66 horsepower, the SV is right in the hunt with the larger-displacement, two-valve Ducatis at the expense of some midrange grunt. Still, the SV's engine is a peach, smooth and revvy but also imbued with enough poke in the middle to give your left foot a rest. Our California-spec SV-S carbureted extremely well (better, in fact, than the 49-state SVs we've had through here, although we can't explain why) and offers your choice of around-town putt or good

top-end surge. This power runs downstream through a slightly grabby clutch—much better on our brand-new SV-S than the 4000-mile oft-wheelied beaters some of us actually sort of own—to a terrific six-speed transmission.

Specifications be damned, we feel the need to point out the perceptory divergence between the SV and SV-S. Sitting tall in the SV's saddle (and bolstered by marginally shorter gearing by way of a one-tooth-larger rear sprocket), the rider of the naked bike feels like he's on a torquey, snappy horse, one ready to charge with the slightest squeeze of the heels. Thanks in part to the more laid-out riding position, the SV-S gains speed in what feels like a more measured run, pressing ahead rather than lunging. It's got to be the ergonomics because one tooth on the sprocket (and a slight weight difference) doesn't explain it.

Ultimately, the SV-S's more relaxed demeanor changes the perceived balance of the bike. While the SV feels like it's got engine and chassis in equal measure—maybe you don't *want* a whole lot more power, fellah—the S sends back the message that another five or 10 horses would be perfectly welcome and easily accommodated. Hell, make that 15 for all we care.

And this increase in headroom comes without any chassis or, more to the point, suspension alterations. Suzuki says the SV and SV-S ride on the same major suspension—a 41mm damping-rod fork up front, no adjustments (but carrying a bit more fork oil than the naked SV's), and a seven-way-preload-adjustable shock attached to the aluminum swingarm. It's here Suzuki scraped the expensive parts from the build sheet. The fork needs internal tweaking to work better, and the non-rebuildable shock is looking for the garbage bin in the quest to improve your SV's ride.

Both ends of the bike are softly sprung, but on the standard SV you'll notice the fork the most. It wears 0.7 kg/mm springs when the weight of the bike really calls for something between 0.8 and 0.85 kg/mm. Hard braking from the strong twin-piston Tokicos sends the normal SV's fork right down to the stops and your view from the saddle is a massive pitch forward. But it's an easier pill to swallow on the SV-S; even though the fork leaves you with precious little travel to deal with bumps on your braking line, the bike doesn't feel like it's pitching as much.

Play nice with the SV-S and you won't notice as much of the suspension's low-class breeding. Even lighter riders will experience a good highway ride, with only the occasional sharp-edge bump hammering through the bars and pegs to remind you this is no GSX-R in the suspension department. Perhaps the biggest improvement in the SV's highway comportment is the addition of the half fairing combined with the sportier riding position. On the naked bike, 80 mph is a real chore. The S's goggle-eyed fairing provides a useful if somewhat small pocket of undisturbed air, but together with the new ergos allows you to chuck along at 80 mph without a care in the world, except maybe for local law enforcement.

While we have all loved the SV for commuting, few of us would have volunteered for a 1000-mile tour on one; the SV-S changes the threshold. At elevated cruising speeds, the little V-twin's vibes are just becoming discernible through the grips and pegs. You have to be zinging the engine to 8000 rpm and above to even consider getting sleepy foot.

Choosing between an SV and an SV-S actually isn't a tough decision. If you're the Monster type—primarily city and tight-backroad riding, enamored of the naked profile, general arrested development—then buy (or don't sell) your regular SV. If you've grown up a bit and find joy in a fine bottle of wine rather than a 12-pack of Mickey's Big Mouth, then you're probably the SV-S type. Think of the SV-S as the adult alternative, an inexpensive sportbike that gives all the visceral appeal of the current 600 supersports save for ultimate acceleration. And at this price you can still spend a grand on the suspension and come out ahead. Together, the SV650 and SV650S form a potent combination in Suzuki dealerships, and would seem to forever rewrite the success story of middleweight V-twins in America. Not a moment too soon. MC

Off the Record

kai

Age: 30
Height: 5 ft. 4 in.
Weight: 145 lb.
Inseam: 28 in.
Favorite wannabe Italian bike: Yamaha TRX850

The SV650S feels like it's ready for the track—today. I didn't think adding a half-fairing and clip-ons could make such a difference in the feel of the bike, but it did. The good brakes, strong motor and semi-racetrack ergos make for a great track-day weapon. Just grab your gear and you're gone. The naked version of the Suzuki, however, needs some tweaking before going trackside. Not much, mind you; exchanging the bars, upgrading the fork and adding rearsets would be all it'd take. Does that make the standard SV any less of a bike? Of course not. Think of the new SV-S as just another interpretation of a great motorcycle. ***—Garrett Kai***

boehm

Age: 38
Height: 6 ft.
Weight: 225 lb.
Inseam: 32 in.
Favorite wannabe Italian bike: Honda VFR800F

It's funny, but the addition of a fairing, sportier ergos and taller gearing causes me to cut the S-model a bit less slack than the naked SV. Don't get me wrong; I like the S a lot. But now that it feels more like an honest-to-gosh sportbike—and not simply a highly entertaining bang-for-the-buck budget-blaster—the el-cheapo suspension is a lot more noticeable, and a lot more aggravating. Still, at roughly six grand, the thing's a helluva bargain, and a massive amount of fun, especially on smoother back-roads where the suspension doesn't have to work as hard. I can see an S-model Sportbike Surgery story coming; Cartridge Emulators up front, a quality shock in back, stickier tires, yooowwwwzzzzzaaaaaaaaa! ***—Mitch Boehm***

Squinty headlights peer from the plastic half-fairing. It provides enough wind protection to make long stints at high speed possible and offers a familial link to the TL1000S.

Perhaps the biggest improvement in the SV's highway comportment is the addition of the half fairing combined with the sportier riding position.

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2001 New Bike Guide

Nineteen manufacturers display their full lineups for 2001. So many bikes, so little time...

Yamaha FZ1 | Suzuki VL800 Volusia | Honda Gold Wing

APRILIA

New Models:

ETV1000 CapoNord — **N/A**

Aprilia combines the Mille engine with a twin-spar aluminum frame and Paris-Dakar styling for an all-new entry.

RST1000 Futura — **N/A**

Sport-touring the Aprilia way with aggressive styling and the proven 1000cc Mille powerplant.

Carryover Models:

Pegaso 650 i.e. — **$7877**

Fuel injection added for 2001.

RS50 — **$3500**

RSV Mille — **$13,500**

Although it looks similar to last year's model, the 2001 Mille is substantially reworked, with a revised engine and frame plus styling changes.

RSV Mille R — **$16,799**

RSV Mille SP — **$32,000**

RS250 Challenge — **$8400**

SL1000 Falco — **$11,299**

BIMOTA

Carryover Models:

DB4 — **$18,550**

Mantra — **$18,530**

SB6R — **$21,250**

SB8R — **$23,595**

SB8S — **$26,595**

YB11 — **$20,250**

BMW

New Models:

R1150R — **N/A**

R1200C Phoenix — **$15,100**

Carryover Models:

F650GS — **$8100**

K1200LT — **$16,990**

K1200RS — **$16,700–$17,300**

R1100RS ABS — **$15,100**

R1100RT — **$15,990**

R1100S — **$13,990–$16,500**

R1150GS — **$14,500**

R1200C ABS — **$14,500**

R1200C Euro — **$15,100**

R1200C Montana — **N/A**

BUELL

New Models:

Cyclone M2 Low — **$8995**

Lower seat height creates a Cyclone M2 for the vertically challenged.

Carryover Models:

Blast! — **$4395**

Larger, 80-tooth rear sprocket for improved acceleration.

Cyclone M2 — **$8795**

New dash panel, tachometer, mirrors and black cylinder heads.

Lightning X1 — **$10,695**

Thunderbolt S3 — **$11,995**

Thunderbolt S3T — **$12,795**

All V-twin Buells receive improved rear suspension, a new shifter, upgraded exhaust system and a new, high-efficiency oil pump.

DUCATI

New Models:

750 Sport — **$7695**

996R — **Approx. $24,000**

Limited production special with new *Testastretta* engine, styling changes and increased performance.

Monster 600 — **$5995 ($6495)**

Monster 900 S4 — **$12,495**

Now with 916 engine and power.

Carryover Models:

748 — **$12,795–$13,995**

996 — **$16,795–$21,495**

Monster 750 — **$7495–$7995**

Monster 900 — **$9995–$10,995**

ST2 — **$11,795**

ST4 — **$13,295**

Supersport 750 Half Fairing — **$8745**

Full Fairing — **$9445**

Supersport 900 Half Fairing — **$10,595**

Full Fairing — **$11,295**

Discontinued Models:

Monster 900 (Standard)

EXCELSIOR-HENDERSON

Carryover Models:

Super X — **$18,100**

Super X Deadwood Special — **$18,900**

HARLEY-DAVIDSON

New Models:

Dyna Super Glide T-Sport — **$14,720**

Carryover Models:

Dyna Low Rider — **$14,595**

Dyna Super Glide — **$11,470**

Dyna Super Glide Sport — **$13,720**

Dyna Wide Glide — **$15,695**

Electra Glide Classic with ESPFI — **$15,940**

Electra Glide Standard — **$13,595**

Fat Boy — **$15,495**

Heritage Softail Classic — **$16,235**

Heritage Springer — **$17,545**

Night Train — **$14,635**

Road Glide with ESPFI — **$15,780**

Road King Classic — **$16,695**

Road King with ESPFI — **$15,520**

Softail Deuce — **$16,235**

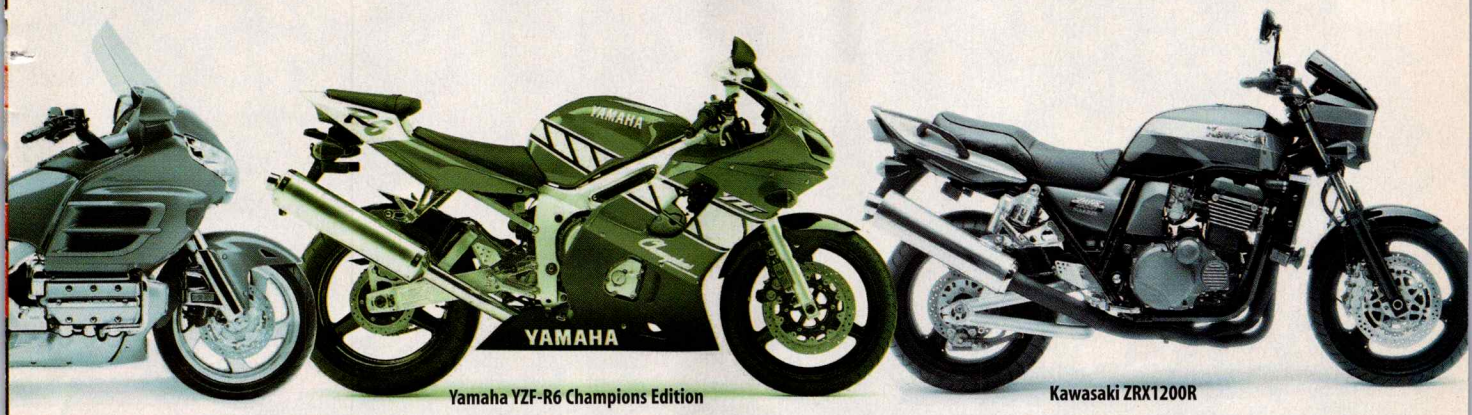
Softail Standard — **$12,535**

Sportster 883 — **$5595**

Sportster 883 Custom — **$6695**

Sportster 883 Hugger — **$6055**

2001 New Bike Guide



Yamaha YZF-R6 Champions Edition

Kawasaki ZRX1200R

Sportster 1200 $7895
Sportster 1200 Custom $8995
Sportster 1200 Sport $8595
Springer Softail $15,690
Ultra Classic Electra Glide $18,980

Discontinued Models:
Dyna Super Glide - Convertible

HONDA

New Models:

CBR600F4i $8199

Honda's updated CBR600 offers a redesigned frame and bodywork, fuel injection and revised ram air.

Gold Wing 1800 $17,499
with optional ABS $18,499

Completely redone for 2001, the new-generation Gold Wing features more motor (1832cc), a sporty twin-spar frame, single-sided swingarm and a totally new look.

Shadow Spirit 750 $5999

Shadow A.C.E. power wrapped with street-rod styling and a really, really low price.

VTX (early release 2002 model) N/A

The biggest production motor in the industry meets hot-rod V-twin styling and such tricky items as an inverted fork and fuel injection.

Carryover Models:

CBR929RR $9999–$10,999
CBR1100XX $10,999
Magna $7499
Nighthawk 250 $3399
Nighthawk 750 $5799
RC51 $10,999
Rebel $2999
Shadow A.C.E. 750 Deluxe $5999–$6199
Shadow A.C.E. Tourer $9299
Shadow Aero $8999–$9299
Shadow Sabre $8199–$8399
Shadow Spirit $7999
Shadow VLX $4999
Shadow VLX Deluxe $5299
ST1100 $11,899–$14,399
Valkyrie $13,099–$13,299
Valkyrie Interstate $15,499–$15,999
VFR800F Interceptor $9499
VTR1000F Super Hawk $8999
XR650L $5499

Discontinued Models:

CBR600F4
Gold Wing SE and Aspencade
Valkyrie Tourer

HUSABERG

Carryover Models:

FE600E N/A

KAWASAKI

New Models:

Eliminator 125 $2499

Low seat height and an even lower price.

ZR-7S $5999

A standard ZR-7 with a bikini fairing and a firmer front end.

ZRX1200R $7899

Team Green's popular ZRX is now available (even in California) with a new, 1200cc engine, an updated chassis,and wider rear wheel.

Carryover Models:

Concours $8199
KE100 $1999
KL250 Super Sherpa $3999
KLR250 $4149
KLR650 $4999
Ninja 250R $3299
Ninja 500R $5099
Ninja ZX-6 $7199
Ninja ZX-6R $8099
Ninja ZX-7R $9299
Ninja ZX-9R $10,199
Ninja ZX-11 $10,199
Ninja ZX-12R $11,999
Voyager XII $12,299
Vulcan 500 LTD $4699
Vulcan 750 $6099
Vulcan 800 $6299
Vulcan 800 Classic $6999
Vulcan 800 Drifter $7499

Solo seat and more chrome for 2001.

Vulcan 1500 Classic $9999
Vulcan 1500 Classic FI $10,799
Vulcan 1500 Drifter $11,799

Larger five-gallon fuel tank, solo seat, more chrome and new colors for 2001.

Vulcan 1500 Nomad $12,299
Vulcan 1500 Nomad FI $12,999

Larger fuel tank (five-gallon), repositioned steering lock and new colors.

W650 $6599

Upgraded steering geometry and front suspension componentry for 2001.

KTM

New Models:

LC8 Adventurer N/A

Carryover Models:

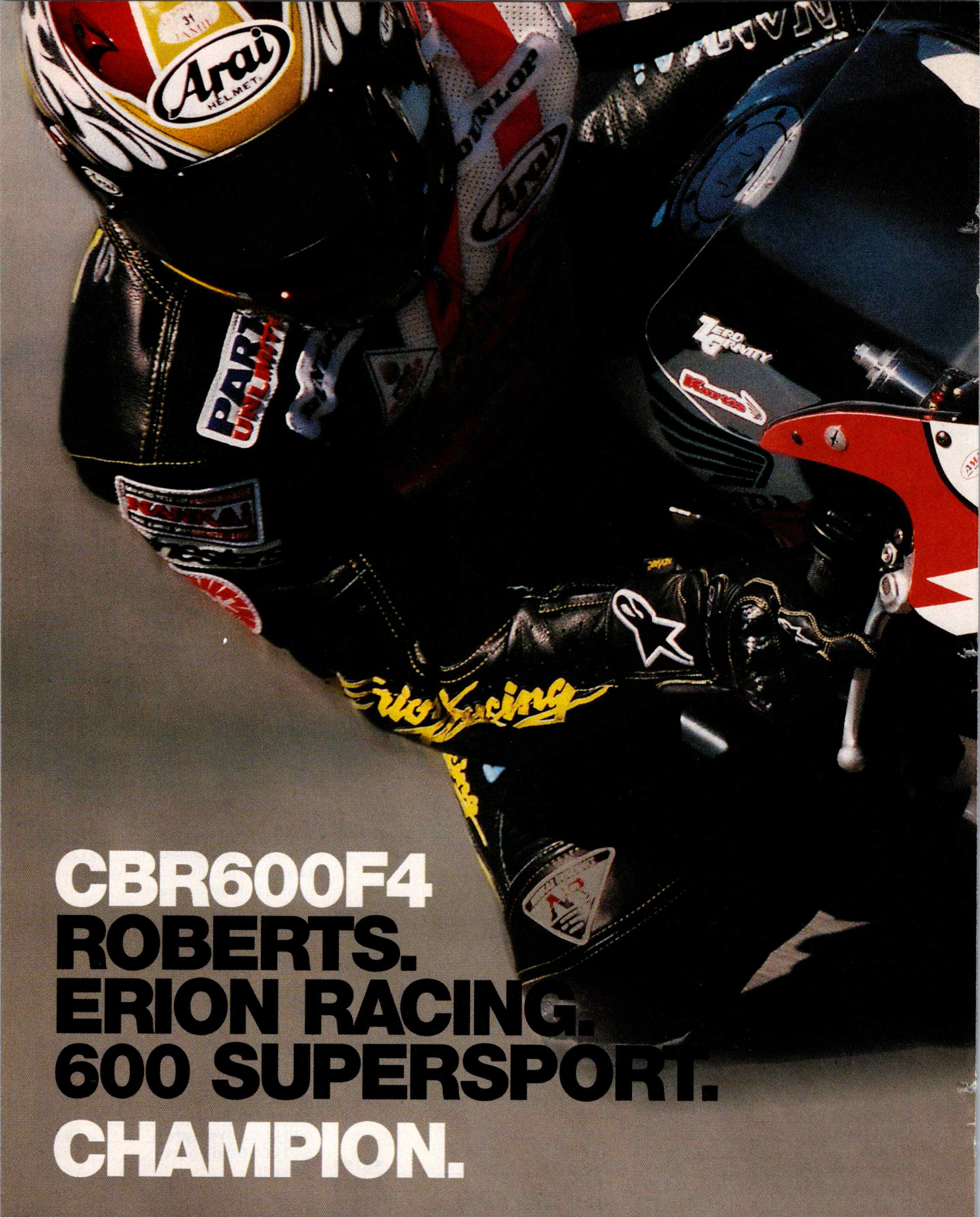
400LC4 Dual Sport $6598
400LC4 Super Moto $7298
640 LC4 Adventure R $8198
640 LC4 Dual Sport $6998
Duke II $8198

LAVERDA

Carryover Models:

750 Formula $10,595
750 Strike $8495

continued on page 54



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2001 New Bike Guide

continued from page 49

750 Strike Café Racer	**$8995**
750 Supersport	**$9495**

MOTO GUZZI

Carryover Models:

California Special (formerly V11 Bassa)	**$11,700**
Quota 1100ES	**$9995**
V11 Jackal	**$8495**
V11 Sport	**$11,900**

MUZ

Carryover Models:

Black Panther	**$6195**
Charly	**$1049**
Moskito	**$1799**
Moskito SX	**$1999**
Skorpion Sport Cup	**$5795**
Skorpion Tour	**$4995**
Skorpion Traveller	**$6495**

Discontinued Models:

Skorpion Replica

MV AGUSTA

New Models:

Brutale Serie Oro	**N/A**

Carryover Models:

F4S 750 1+1	**N/A**
F4S 750 Senna	**N/A**
F4S 750 SPS	**N/A**
F4S 750 Strada	**$18,895**

SUZUKI

New Models:

GSF1200S	**$7399**
naked version	**$6999**

New-for-2001 Bandit features updated fairing and a redesigned chassis.

GSX-R600 **$7999**

Less weight, fuel injection and more horsepower.

GSX-R1000 **$10,399**

YZF-R1 owners beware: The GSX-R1000 claims big power and a claimed dry weight of just 375 pounds.

SV650S **$6199**

Faired version of Suzuki's popular V-twin middleweight.

VL800 Volusia **$6599**

Restyled Intruder 800 engine mated to retro styling.

Carryover Models:

DR200SE	**$3899**
DR650SE	**$5449**
DR-Z400SE	**$5449**
GS500E	**$4399**
GSF600S Bandit	**$5849**
GSX600F Katana	**$6299**
GSX750F Katana	**$7299**
GSX1300R Hayabusa	**$10,849**
GSX-R750	**$9449**
GZ250	**$2999**
LS650 Savage	**$4299**
SV650	**$5799**
TL1000R	**$9599**
TL1000S	**$9099**
VL1500 Intruder LC	**$9999**
VS800 Intruder	**$6399**
VS1400 Intruder	**$8349**
VZ800 Marauder	**$5999**

TRIUMPH

New Models:

Bonneville	**$6999**

Classic stying, modern performance and a great price.

Carryover Models:

Adventurer	**$8999**
Daytona 955i	**$10,999**
Legend	**$7799**
Speed Triple	**$10,499**
Sprint RS	**$8999**
Sprint ST	**$10,799**
Thunderbird	**$8999**
Tiger	**$10,799**

Significant changes, including adding the 955i engine with more displacement and horsepower.

Trophy 900	**$10,999**
Trophy 1200	**$11,999**
TT600	**$7799**

Discontinued Models:

Thunderbird Sport

VICTORY

New Models:

V92C Deluxe	**$14,599**

Deluxe model now includes windshield, saddlebags, a backrest and passenger floorboards.

Carryover Models:

V92C	**$13,399–$13,999**
V92SC	**$13,399–$13,999**

YAMAHA

New Models:

FZ1	**$8499**

Naked R1 with comfortable ergos and an aggressive look.

Road Star Midnight Star **$11,799**

All-new special edition Road Star features chrome front end, blacked-out engine and studded seat.

Vino **$1699**

Euro-inspired scooter features retro looks and 49cc of performance.

Carryover Models:

Road Star	**$10,999–$11,199**
Road Star Silverado	**$12,399–$12,599**
Royal Star Boulevard	**$14,299**
Royal Star Tour Deluxe	**$15,499**
Royal Star Venture	**$16,399**
TW200	**$3599**
Virago 250	**$3399**
V-Max	**$10,899**
V-Star 1100 Classic	**$8199–$8399**
V-Star 1100 Custom	**$7899–$8099**
V-Star Classic	**$5899–$5999**
V-Star Custom	**$5599**
XT225	**$3999**
YZF-R1	**$10,299**
Champions Limited Edition	**$10,799**
YZF-R6	**$7999**
Champions Limited Edition	**$8499**
YZF-600R	**$6999**

Discontinued Models:

Road Star MM Limited
Royal Star Tour Classic
Royal Star Venture MM Limited
Virago 535
XT350 MC

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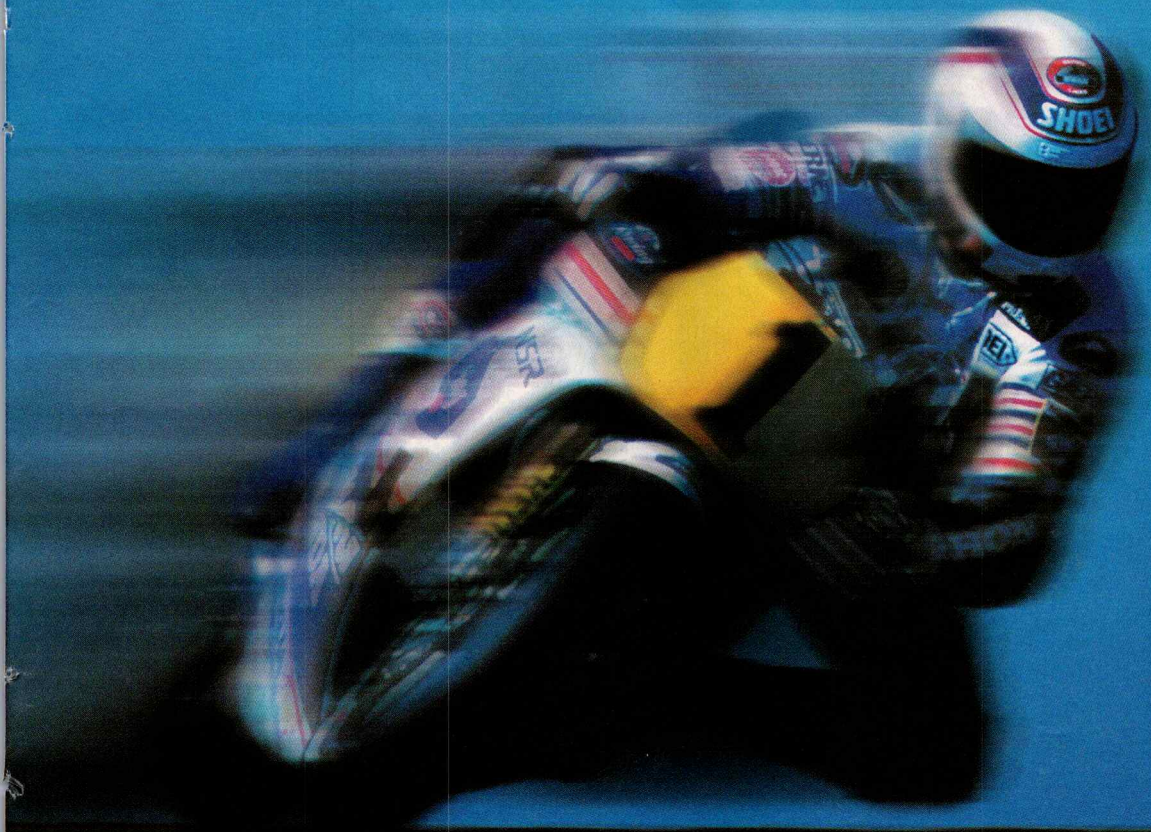

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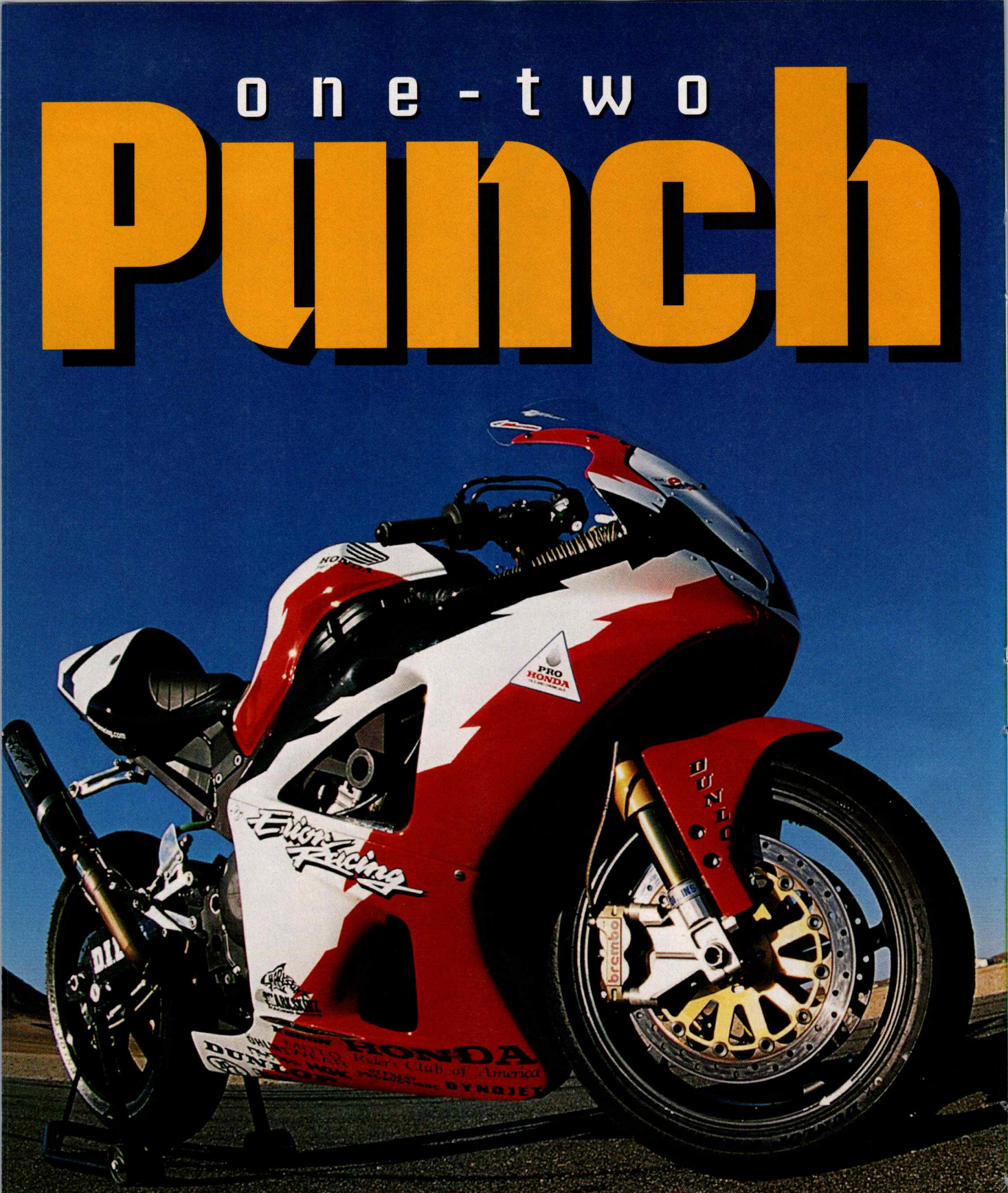
one-two Punch



All-new motorcycles aren't supposed to win—or challenge for—championships. But by finishing first and second respectively in Formula Xtreme and Superbike in 2000, Honda's CBR929RR and RC51—and the teams that fielded them—proved the conventional wisdom wrong

By Mitch Boehm.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FOR world-class roadrace teams? Aligning themselves with the right factory? Acquiring the best riders? Managing the sicko pace of the season itself?

If you ask the folks who run—or have run—championship-winning teams, many will mention something else: competing on a brand-new motorcycle.

Rob Muzzy, whose teams have won numerous AMA and World Superbike championships, has plenty to say on the subject. "In general," the mustachioed one says, "starting the season with a brand-new bike—even one prepared by the factory—is a major handicap. It usually takes a minimum of a

BRIAN J. NELSON

BRIAN J. NELSON

Armed with new-generation racebikes that hadn't seen competition until the start of the season, American Honda's Nicky Hayden (left) and Erion Racing's Kurtis Roberts (above) stormed Shermanlike through the 2000 AMA roadrace series—Roberts winning his second consecutive Formula Xtreme title (and taking the 600 Supersport title as well) and Hayden grabbing a hard-fought second in Superbike behind Mat Mladin's well-developed Yoshimura/Suzuki GSX-R750.

For all its world-class tech, Hayden's RC51 (above) is reasonably uncluttered when naked. American Honda is the only outside entity (besides the Castrol-Honda team, of course) to get works-spec RC51s; the "kit" bikes being raced in the United Kingdom and elsewhere are way off the pace. The bikes (two for each rider, with spare engines) come from HRC ready to go, and the only changes allowed are adjustments to componentry already in place. Fine-tuning for rider and track is hugely important, though, and the bike allows for plenty. Cockpit (right) is basic (except for the thumb-operated rear brake lever), with an LCD panel monitoring the HRC-built data-acquisition system.

year to get a new bike at or near its potential. It's very difficult; never expect to do well with an all-new bike." And beginning the season at Daytona, he adds, is "a major curse."

Superbike history in the United States reinforces Muzzy's claim. Since 1983, only one all-new Superbike platform—the '96 ZX-7R—has captured the AMA Superbike title. (We're talking some serious hardware, too, including the '83 V45 Interceptor, '85 FZ750, '86 GSX-R750, '88 GSX-R750, '90 RC30, '94 V45 and '96 GSX-R750.) That '96 title, Muzzy says, was a struggle. "We got an all-new ZX-7R in '96," he says, "but it took us an entire year to get the '96 bike as good as the '95 bike. And it took six more months to get it to make more power!"

All of which makes the success attained during 2000 by Kurtis Roberts (who won his second consecutive Formula Xtreme title) and Nicky Hayden (who finished a close runner-up to Suzuki's Mat Mladin) all the more impressive, and a touch ironic. Both, see, were aboard totally new racebikes in 2000, racebikes based upon streetbikes that had barely arrived in U.S. showrooms when the season began in March of last year.

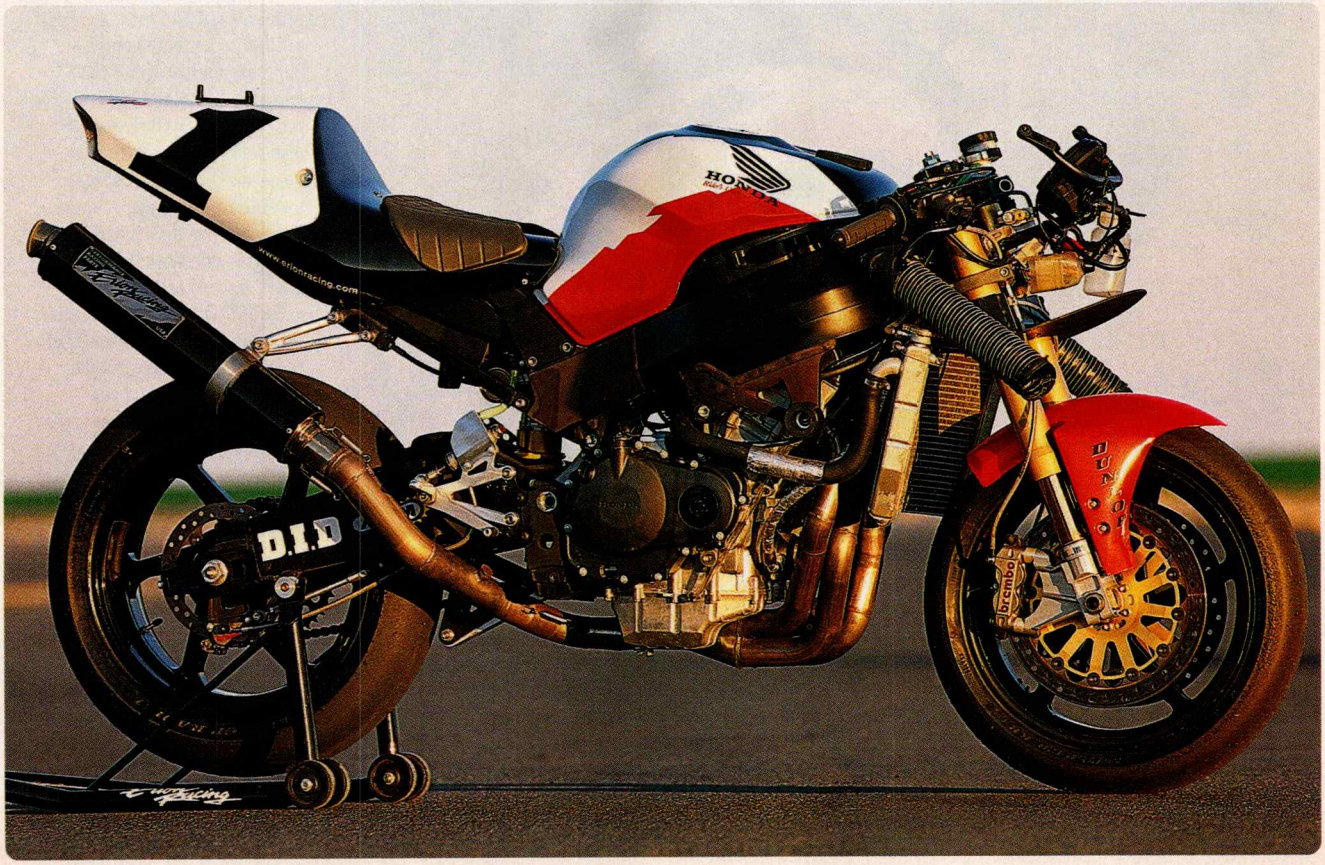
Fortunately, both riders had serious weapons at their disposal: Honda Racing Corporation, Honda R&D Japan—and two very competent teams backing them up.

American Honda race team manager Gary Mathers, a guy who knows well the difficulty of competing with brand-new bikes, says his team was far from overconfident going into 2000—especially with the grueling Daytona 200 up first. "We knew the bikes were good after seeing test results from Colin Edwards [who clinched the 2000 World Superbike title on an RC51 nearly identical to Hayden's] and Aaron Slight," Mathers says, "but we didn't know what to expect. Could the bikes go hard for 200 miles? We just didn't know."

Hayden's superb ride in the 200-miler, where he finished just inches behind Mat Mladin to grab runner-up honors, proved the V-twin-powered RC could indeed go the distance, and do it competitively. Mathers was as impressed with the RC as with Hayden's savvy and skill. "It's an amazing engine," he says. "When we pulled them apart after the 200 we found very little wear, and two big pistons tend to cause a lot of it. We went half the season with the same crankcases! We had very few problems; it's the best new bike I've ever been involved with." That's quite a statement considering Mathers's 20-plus-year history in Superbike racing. "HRC really did its homework."

Mathers's mention of HRC is wholly appropriate here. Although its traditional function has been to produce nonproduction "works" machines (Honda's GP bikes are a good example) along with racing parts for selected production-based racebikes, HRC was involved early-on with development of the production bike itself. The RC51 is, in fact, the first Honda production street-

Looking even nastier than the factory RC51, the black-framed Erion Racing CBR929RR (below) is about as radical as you can get within the wide-open Formula Xtreme rules. The engine's 975 cubic centimeters and thoroughly massaged internals produce roughly 180 rear-wheel horsepower, while Brembo brakes, Öhlins suspension, Dunlop slicks and a handmade alloy swingarm help put said power to the asphalt in some semblance of a controllable fashion. The bike feels quite small from the cockpit (left), and is, weighing just more than the class's 365-pound weight limit. Those funky ram-air scoops *do* seem to say, "Danger, Will Robinson!" though.



Punch Drunk

Intoxicating rides on Roberts's and Hayden's world-class Honda roadracers

"WELL," 19-YEAR-OLD NICKY HAYDEN ASKS IN A KENTUCKY drawl that makes the word sound almost like *whale*, "how was it?"

I'm sitting under a canopy, sweat-soaked, trying to hide from the 105-degree heat after my first stint aboard his RC51. I answer his mischievous grin with a lackadaisical look of my own, and say, "It sucked."

Hayden laughs, shakes his head and walks toward Willow's pit wall and the CBR he and his crew are dialing in for the 600 Supersport final in two weeks' time. He knows, of course, that I'm messing with him, knows it just as surely as he knows the RC51 he'll use to try to win Willow's upcoming Superbike national—and maybe even the 2000 title—is arguably the best Superbike Honda's ever built.

I've only ridden a few honest-to-God Superbikes, but I do have enough laps on top-shelf roadracers to know one thing about Hayden's RC: It doesn't suck. I'd bet money, in fact, that its limits rise above those of any non-GP bike in existence. Colin Edwards's World Superbike title on an almost identical machine certainly adds weight to that theory.

Here are the two main things I came away with after riding Hayden's RC (aside from being absolutely petrified I'd turn the thing into a sugar donut before the Willow national). One, that it's the most functionally competent racebike I've ever ridden; and two, that it seemed to say "wake me up when you're done" when I tried (in vain) to make the thing sweat a bit. (I *am* 225 pounds, remember.) Whether ripping through Turn Eight at nearly full honk (killer feedback, locomotivelike stability), exiting Turn Two at 100 mph leaned way over through the ripples (controllable drift, superb wheel control, more great feedback) or braking *hard* into Turn Three (unreal brakes, minimum forward pitching), Hayden's RC did absolutely nothing wrong—at least as far as I could tell. Talk about "max headroom"!

The Erion Racing CBR was similarly competent, though it felt very, very different than the RC. Where the twin seemed long, hugely stable and powered by an engine that makes big-time boost everywhere in the rev band, the 929 felt more like a massively hot-rodded 600, a point-and-shoot machine that wanted to be revved and tossed around to be truly happy. Compared with Erion's title-winning CBR900RR (which I rode last year), the new CBR was smaller, lighter, revvier, easier to turn and a lot more confidence-inspiring at speed. Roberts agreed. "It's definitely easier to ride than the old bike," he told me.

So did I learn anything other than the fact that the limits of today's world-class racebikes are higher than ever? Yes—that those limits are even harder for mere mortals to catch a glimpse of. Sure was fun trying, though. ***—Mitch Boehm***

bike to be co-engineered by HRC and Honda R&D.

Still, RC51 development wasn't immune to problems. The bike actually began life as a highly modified VTR1000F. But when prototypes were found to be less-then-ideal once big horsepower, slicks and WSC riders were added to the mix, Honda tossed its original concept and started over, involving HRC and flexing HoMoCo's massive development biceps to get the now-totally-new bike turned out in less than two years. This puts a certain spin on Mathers's "homework" statement.

Development of the race-spec RC didn't stop once production bikes began rolling off the assembly line, or once the racing season started. "We had a chance to get more top-end power halfway through the season," says Mathers, "but we were already having some traction problems, so we declined." A good move, as Colin Edwards's WSC team—which gave him the extra top-end but then yanked it a few races later after encountering traction problems of their own—can attest.

The AMA Superbike finale at Willow Springs in October put a bright red exclamation point on Hayden's season. Although Mladin wrapped up his second consecutive Superbike title with a conservative eighth-place finish, Hayden's dominant victory—and dirttracking antics—put the entire Superbike paddock on

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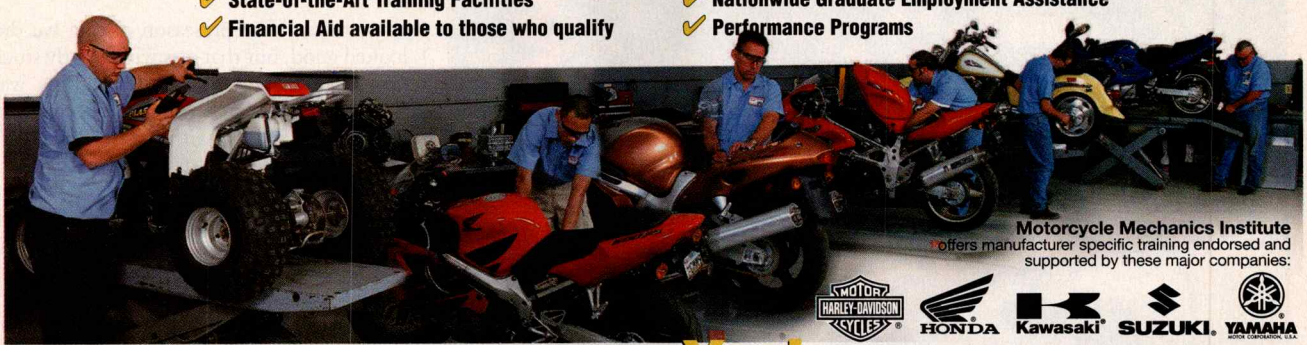

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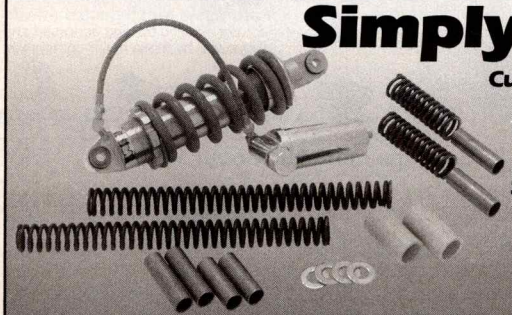

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WORKS SHOCKS

One-Two Punch

continued from page 60

notice that 2001 is very likely going to be his—and the RC51's—show.

Like Mathers, Erion Racing's Kevin Erion and crew chief Rick Hobbs weren't sure what to expect from the CBR929RR. Unlike their colleagues at American Honda, who get HRC-prepped bikes at the start of the year as part of their lease agreement with Honda Japan, the Erion crew would be handling the streetbike-to-racebike transformation themselves, with just a smidge of help from Honda R&D and 929 project leader Tadao Baba.

"I was nervous about the 929 early on,"

As American Honda Racing's crew chief, Ray Plumb (left) has been tending to Team Honda racebikes—most of them with a Vee engine configuration—for many, many years. Plumb oversaw a semi-restructured team this year, and as the season's results will attest, it's a group that worked very smoothly together.

Erion says. "The preseason testing we did looked good, but that was with a fairly stock bike, so you never know. Everything was new; could we match what we'd been doing (with the old CBR) with the new bike? We didn't know. Yeah, I was concerned."

Hobbs echoes Erion's sentiment. "There was a lot we weren't sure about," he says, "especially the chassis and engine durability. The chassis was a question mark because it was new. The engine was pretty straightforward, so we knew we could make competitive power. But since we'd be making all the go-fast parts ourselves, and doing it with so little time for testing, we didn't know how things would hold up. We did some dyno work, but you can't simulate racing stresses on the dyno. We were prepared to lose some races."

When the Erion team showed up for the first Xtreme race at Sears Point, the 929 racer was in fully modified form—but largely untested. "There was definitely

some trepidation there," says Hobbs. Although the race was rained out, practice went well, the sessions setting the stage for Xtreme wins by Roberts at the next several races. "The chassis was a surprise," says Hobbs. "It was plenty rigid. Also, when we raised ride height in back to get decent cornering clearance, the front-end geometry came right into line. Nice."

Coincidence? Hardly. During 929 development, project leader Baba made sure the new-generation double-R would be as good on the racetrack as it was on the street by cleverly integrating such sometimes-conflicting track and street attributes as frame rigidity and overall chassis geometry, among others. Baba-san also helped the Erion crew with some special parts, including fuel-injection software, slipper clutch and race-spec transmission.

The Erion crew added some tricks of its own during the season, such as a ram-air system for more top-speed at faster circuits like Elkhart Lake. "It worked fine," Hobbs says with a smile, "but it certainly wasn't very pretty at first."

"We were surprised at how well the bike worked," says Erion. "Mr. Baba told us it would make a good racebike," he says, adding with a grin, "and we should have listened!" Erion says the bike remained pretty much the same throughout the season (the ram-air excepted), and the results confirmed the decision to leave things alone. Roberts won six of eight Xtreme events in 2000, losing only to Valvoline Suzuki's Grant Lopez (on an 870cc GSX-R750) at Pikes Peak, with Roberts sitting out the final at Willow to concentrate on winning the 600 Supersport title—which he did in dramatic fashion with his win at Willow.

"My hat's off to Kurtis," says Erion, referring to the wild 600 final. "I mean, how many times can you crash and not fall off?!"

For 2001, Roberts will split his time between the Erion and Honda teams, riding the new F4i for Erion in defense of his 2000 title and the RC51 alongside Hayden and Miguel DuHamel for American Honda. Roberts won't ride the 929, though; that honor goes to Jake Zemke, who rode well for Erion's Bruce Group satellite team in 2000, and Erion newcomer Mark Miller.

As for the 929, Erion sees continued development. "We're working with Baba-san on improved ram-air and more aerodynamic bodywork," he says. "Even with competition from Suzuki's new GSX-R1000, it should be a good season for us."

And what of Nicky and the RC51? "With all the bike and track data we were able to gather this year," Mathers says, "along with everything HRC learned with Colin and Aaron, next year's gonna be hell on the competition."

One thing's for sure: Both teams will head into the coming season with a lot more confidence than they had this time last year. MC

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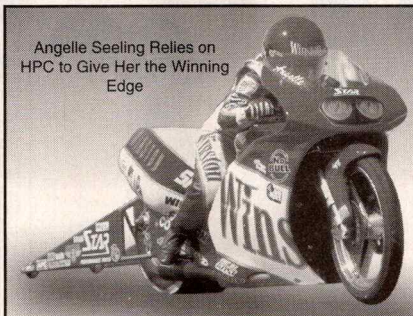

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WWW = WIDE WHITE WALL
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MM90HB19 TL RWL	67.97
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MT90HB16 TL RWL	97.97
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100/90V19	74.97
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130/90VB16	86.97
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100/90H19	73.97
100/90H19 WWW	89.97
110/90H19	76.97
80/90H21	76.97
MH90H21	78.97
MH90H21 WWW	91.97
REAR	**SALE**
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150/90H15	129.97
150/90V15*	106.97
170/80H15	110.97
MT90H16	99.97
MT90H16 WWW	110.97
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170/60ZR17	104.97
180/55ZR17	109.97
190/50ZR17	144.97

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150/80V16	108.97
130/80V18	91.97
140/70V18	108.97
100/90V19	76.97

AVON AV27

FRONT	SALE
120/80ZR16	108.97
130/70ZR16	119.97
110/80ZR17	108.97
120/60ZR17	110.97
120/70ZR17	110.97
130/60ZR17	119.97
110/80ZR18	110.97

AVON AZARO

FRONT AV39	SALE
130/70ZR16	143.97
120/60ZR17	127.97
120/70ZR17	127.97
120/70ZR17 *	127.97
REAR AV40	**SALE**
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170/60ZR17	157.97
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190/50ZR17 ***	179.97

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**CBR1100XX FITMENT
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AVON AM22/AM23

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110/80VB18	111.97
REAR AM23	**SALE**
140/80VB16	142.97
160/80VB16	150.97
180/60VB16	165.97
200/60VB16	183.97
130/70VB18	128.97
150/70VB18	149.97
180/55VB18	175.97
200/55VB18	183.97

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AVON

AVON AZARO

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110/80ZR17	111.97
120/60ZR17	114.97
120/70ZR17	114.97
110/80ZR18	116.97
REAR AV36	**SALE**
160/80ZR16	133.97
140/80ZR17	127.97
150/70ZR17	133.97
160/60ZR17 (4.5"RIM)	139.97
160/60ZR17 (5.0"RIM)	139.97
160/70ZR17	155.97
170/60ZR17 (5.0"RIM)	143.97
170/60ZR17 (5.5"RIM)	143.97
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190/50ZR17	163.97
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110/70H17	66.97
110/80H17	66.97
120/70H17	68.97
90/90H18	57.97
100/80H18	60.97
100/90H18	59.97
REAR	**SALE**
130/90H16	72.97
110/90H17	69.97
120/80H17	59.97
130/70H17	72.97
130/80H17	60.97
140/70H17	75.97
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110/90H18	59.97
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140/70H18	76.97
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120/90H18 RWL	52.97
90/90H19	45.97
100/90H19	49.97
100/90H19 RWL	52.97
110/90H19	50.97
110/90H19 RWL	55.97
REAR	**SALE**
140/90H15 RWL	67.97
150/90H15 RWL	72.97
130/90H16	59.97
130/90H16 RWL	65.97
140/90H16 RWL	72.97
130/90H17	60.97
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REAR	**SALE**
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110/80V18	64.97
110/90V18	64.97
100/90V19	64.97
REAR	**SALE**
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150/80V16	86.97
120/90V17	71.97
130/90V17	74.97

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MU90HB16	106.97
130/90HB17	101.97

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110/80V17	88.97
120/70V17	84.97
90/90H18	68.97
100/90V18	81.97
110/80V18	80.97
110/90V18	88.97
3.25H19	70.97
3.25V19	81.97
3.50H19	78.97
100/90V19	92.97
110/90V19	85.97
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90/90H21	86.97

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REAR	SALE
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140/90V16	108.97
150/80V16	114.97
130/90V17	100.97
4.00V18	86.97
120/90V18	95.97
130/80V18	100.97

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MEZ3 FRONT	SALE
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110/70ZR17	91.97
120/60ZR17	98.97
120/70ZR17	98.97
MEZ3 REAR	
150/60ZR17	119.97
160/60ZR17	121.97
170/60ZR17	124.97
180/55ZR17	127.97
190/50ZR17	147.97
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130/70ZR16	138.97
110/70ZR17	133.97
120/60ZR17	138.97
120/65ZR17	140.97
120/70ZR17	139.97
120/70ZR17 RS2	157.97
MEZ3 RACING REAR	
150/60ZR17	153.97
160/60ZR17	158.97
170/60ZR17 RS2	165.97
180/55ZR17	172.97
180/55ZR17 RS2	172.97
190/50ZR17	182.97

METZELER

METZELER ME880 MARATHON

FRONT	SALE
130/90H16	84.97
150/80H16	95.97
120/70VB17	86.97
120/80V17	89.97
150/80HR17*	131.97
110/90H18	101.97
120/90H18	88.97
130/70HR18	76.97
100/90H19	76.97
110/90H19	80.97
80/90H21	74.97
REAR	**SALE**
140/80HB15	107.97
140/90HB15	103.97
150/80VB15	109.97
150/90HB15	113.97
180/70HB15	119.97
130/90HB16	97.97
140/90HB16	107.97
150/80HB16	120.97
160/80HR16	135.97
180/70HR16*	148.97
140/80HB17	107.97
160/70VB17	108.97

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MEZ2 FRONT

	SALE
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110/80ZR17	89.97

MEZ2 REAR

	SALE
150/80ZR16	118.97
130/80HR17	112.97
140/80ZR17	113.97
170/60ZR18	131.97

METZELER ME55A METRONIC

REAR	SALE
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150/80VB16 MBS	124.97
130/90V17	104.97
140/80VB17 MBS	115.97
140/80VB17 M.G*	115.97
150/70VB17 MBS	124.97
160/70VB17 MBS	130.97
120/90V18	100.97
130/80V18	104.97

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110/80ZR18	96.97
120/70ZR18	96.97
ME Z1 REAR	
150/60ZR18	126.97
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METZELER MEZ4 ME Z4 FRONT

	SALE
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120/70ZR17	96.97
120/70ZR17 (B)*	98.97
110/80ZR18	94.97
120/70ZR18	93.97

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ME Z4 REAR	SALE
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120/70ZR17	94.97
110/80ZR18	91.97
120/70ZR18	91.97
REAR MTR24	**SALE**
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160/60ZR17	117.97
160/70ZR17	118.97
170/60ZR17	118.97
180/55ZR17	122.97
190/50ZR17	140.97
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110/80V17	79.97
120/70VB17	81.97
100/90V18	80.97
110/80VB18	84.97
110/90V18	81.97
100/90V19	75.97
REAR MT08	
130/90V16	100.97
150/80VB16	112.97
130/80VB17	86.97
130/90V17	103.97
140/80VB17	105.97
150/70VB17	108.97
120/90V18	98.97
130/80V18	105.97
140/70VB18	105.97
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120/90H16	72.97
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110/90H18	63.97
120/80H18	70.97
4.00H18	72.97
120/90H18	67.97

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FRONT	SALE
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110/70ZR17	89.97
120/60ZR17	89.97
120/70ZR17	97.97
REAR MTR22 EVO	
150/60ZR17	117.97
160/60ZR17	121.97
170/60ZR17	123.97
180/55ZR17	126.97
190/50ZR17	146.97
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110/70ZR17	122.97
120/60ZR17	179.97
120/65ZR17	131.97
120/70ZR17	127.97
120/70ZR17 SC2	127.97

SC2 = SUPER CORSA/SPECIAL RACING

REAR MTR22C EVO CORSA RACING	
150/60ZR17	139.97
160/60ZR17	144.97
170/60ZR17 SC2	154.97
180/55ZR17	157.97
180/55ZR17 SC2	157.97
190/50ZR17	166.97

MICHELIN

MICHELIN PILOT RACE/ PILOT RACE SOFT

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120/70ZR-17	167.99
REAR PILOT RACE	
160/60ZR-17	210.99
170/60ZR-17	220.99
180/55ZR-17	224.99
FRONT RACE SOFT	
120/70ZR-17	167.99
REAR RACE SOFT	
160/60ZR-17	210.99
170/60ZR-17	220.99
180/55ZR-17	224.99

MICHELIN PILOT SPORT

FRONT	PRICE
130/70ZR-16	112.99
110/70ZR-17	107.99
120/60ZR-17	108.99
120/65ZR-17	111.99
120/70ZR-17	111.99
120/70ZR-17 YR1	112.99
REAR	**PRICE**
150/60ZR-17	128.99
160/60ZR-17	129.99
170/60ZR-17	136.99
180/55ZR-17	146.99
190/50ZR-17	150.99
190/50ZR-17 YR1	185.99
200/50ZR-17	183.99

MICHELIN

MICHELIN MACADAM 50

FRONT	PRICE
110/90V16	77.99
120/70V16	79.99
110/80V17	79.99
120/70V17	84.99
110/80V18	78.99
110/90V18	84.99
90/90H18	73.99
100/90H18	75.99
100/90V18	79.99
100/90V19	79.99
REAR	**PRICE**
150/90V15	73.99
130/90V17	96.99
150/80V16	100.99
150/70H17	95.99
160/70V17	120.99
140/80V17	101.99
130/70H17	87.99
130/90V17	95.99
130/70H18	86.99
130/80V18	97.99
110/90H18	77.99
120/90H18	87.99
120/90V18	91.99

MICHELIN MACADAM 90X SPORT RADIAL

FRONT	PRICE
120/80ZR-16	89.99
110/70ZR-17	85.99
110/80ZR-17	86.99
120/60ZR-17	89.99
120/70ZR-17	89.99
130/60ZR-17	89.99
110/80ZR-18	87.99
120/70ZR-17	90.99
130/70ZR-17	87.99
110/70ZR-17	87.99
REAR	**PRICE**
150/80ZR-16	113.99
150/70ZR-17	105.99
160/60ZR-17	109.99
170/60ZR-17	112.99
180/55ZR-17	118.99
160/60ZR-18	108.99
150/70ZR-18	110.99
190/55ZR-17	136.99

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FROM $44.99

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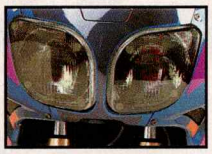
FROM $35.99

BATTERY TENDER PLUS

$52.99 SALE $38.97



LP CLEAR & SMOKE LIGHT LIDS

LP AMBER LIGHT LIDS

$27.99

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LP TANK SKINS

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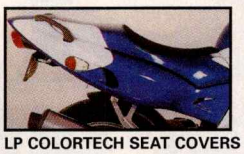
LP TANK WRAPS

$45.99



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DOWCO MOTORCYCLE COVERS

SIZE	PX	GUARDIAN	PROT.2
45	36.77	39.77	46.77
50	39.77	42.77	47.77
100	44.77	49.77	51.77
125	49.77	52.77	57.77
150	55.77	60.77	61.77

COVERCRAFT DELUXE READY-FIT COVERS

XM104, 500CC OR SMALLER	46.99
XM103, HALF DRESS	50.99
XM102, SEMI FULL DRESS	52.99
XM101, FULL DRESS	55.99
XM100, LARGE FULL DRESS	59.99

STANDARD READY-FIT COVERS

X104,500CC OR SMALLER	39.99
X103, HALF DRESS FITS	46.99
X102, SEMI FULL DRESS	48.99
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ELITE 1 PIECE RAINSUIT

$67.99

ELITE RAINSUIT PANT

$26.99

ELITE RAINSUIT JACKET

$44.99

TOURMASTER RAIN BOOTS

$17.99

ELITE NOMEX® RAINSUIT PANT

$49.99

TOUR MASTER BACKPACK

BLACK

$35.99

TOUR MASTER TB-12 BAG

BLACK

$47.99

TOUR MASTER TB-17 TAIL BAG

BLACK

$53.99

TOUR MASTER SB-34 SADDLEBAGS

BLACK

$125.99

TOUR MASTER TB-18M TANK BAG

BLACK/RED

$80.99

TOUR MASTER SB-30 SPORT SADDLEBAG

BLACK/BLACK, BLACK/RED
BLACK/PURPLE

$121.99

TOUR MASTER

TOUR MASTER MAGNETIC TANK BAG

BLACK

$69.99

OCELOT QR 12 LITER TANK BAG

$46.99 SALE $32.97

OCELOT MAGNETIC 12 LITER TANKBAG

$64.99 SALE $45.97

OCELOT QR 18 LITER BAG

$79.99 SALE $52.97

OCELOT

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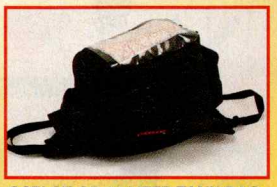
OCELOT TAILBAG 17 LITER

$59.99 SALE $39.97



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$84.99 SALE $57.97

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5'6" X 15MM $29.99
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$7.99

KRYPTONITE HARD WIRE

6' X 15 MM $36.99
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KRYPTONITE NEW YORK CHAIN™ WITH YELLOW EV DISK LOCK™

$119.99

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$41.99

CHATTERBOX HJC-2002 SECURITY SYSTEM

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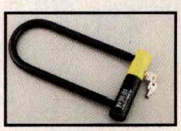

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$79.99

NADY MA-200 MOTORCYCLE ALARM AND PAGER

$142.99

THUNDER PAGE MOTORCYCLE SECURITY ALARM SYSTEM

FROM $244.99

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CLASSIC YELLOW OR CHROME

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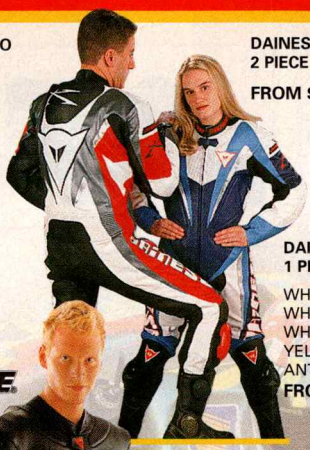
DAINESE TECHNO SUIT 1 PIECE

WHITE/RED
WHITE/BLUE
F. RED/BLK/ANT.
BLACK/RED
BLACK/YELLOW
FROM $1559.96



DAINESE K SUIT 2 PIECE

FROM $1074.96

DAINESE K SUIT 1 PIECE

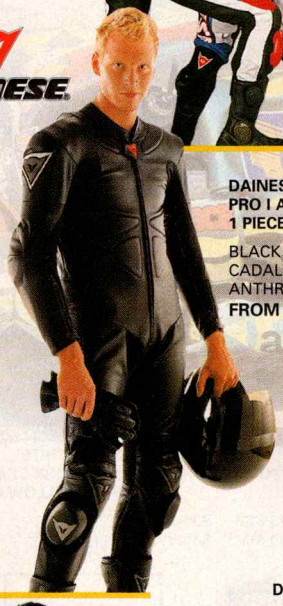
WHT/RED/BLK
WHT/BLUE/BLK
WHT/RED/BLUE
YELLOW/BLK/WHT
ANT./BLACK/RED
FROM $1345.96

DAINESE T3 SUIT

RED/BLACK/ANT.
YELLOW/BLACK/ANT.
WHITE/BLACK/ANT.
BLUE/RED/WHITE
GREEN/BLACK/BLUE
FROM $795.96

DAINESE SAFETY PRO I AND II SUIT 1 PIECE

BLACK
CADALORA
ANTHRACITE/RED
FROM $1345.96



DAINESE PRO-TECH

BLK/ORANGE, BLK/F. RED
BLACK/YELLOW
FROM $1,699.96

DAINESE T-AGE 1 PIECE SUIT

WHITE/ANTHRACITE
BLACK/ANTHRACITE
FROM $1994.96

DAINESE LUCE SUIT 2 PC.

BLACK
FROM $899.96

DAINESE T-AGE GLOVES

BLACK, ANTHRACITE
BLACK/ANTHRACITE
FROM $329.96

DAINESE BRAVE SUIT 2 PIECE

WHITE/RED/BLACK
ANT./BLK/YELLOW
FROM $795.96

DAINESE BAP 2000

FROM $64.99

DAINESE BAP PROTECTORS

FROM $99.99

DAINESE RACE GLOVES

BLACK/GUN/RED, YELLOW/BLACK
BLUE/WHITE, RED/BLACK
RED/WHITE, GREEN/BLUE
FROM $200.99

DAINESE SS5 GLOVES

BLACK, BLACK/RED/WHITE
YELLOW/BLK/ANT., WHT/BLK/ORANGE,
WHT/BLK/RED, WHT/RED/BLUE,
BLUE/WHT/BLUE, WHT/BLUE/GREEN
FROM $107.99

DAINESE RR GLOVES

BLK/FLR. RED, WHT/RED/BLUE
RED/BLACK/ANT., YELLOW/BLK,
BLK/GRN, BLK/ANTHRACITE
WHT/BLUE
FROM $127.99

ALPINESTARS GP TECH BOOT

BLK/GREY, RED/WHITE,
BLUE/WHT, BLK/YELLOW
BIAGGI REPL., DOOHAN REPL.
$260.99

ALPINESTARS SMX BOOT

DOOHAN REPLICA, RED,
BLUE, BLACK, WHITE
$206.99

ALPINESTARS GP TECH FS

BLUE/WHITE, RED/WHITE,
DOOHAN , BIAGGI
$332.99

LEXOL CLEANER
$5.99
LEXOL CONDITIONER
$5.99

ALPINESTARS GPS BOOT

BLACK/GREY, BLACK/RED
$170.99

ALPINESTARS STAGE GTX BOOT

BLACK
$206.99

ALPINESTARS GTX TECH BOOT

BLACK/BLACK
$233.99

A.
B.
C.
D.
E.
F.
G.
H.

DAINESE PROTECTION

DESCRIPTION	PRICE
A. TOE SLIDERS	9.99
B. CALF SLIDERS	17.99
C. KNEE PRO	52.99
D. ELBOW PRO	44.99
E. KNEE 200	
BLACK	37.99
RED	37.99
YELLOW	37.99
F. KNEE SLIDER	
BLACK	33.99
RED	33.99
YELLOW	33.99
G. KIT A-REPLACEMENT ELBOW/FOREARM AND SHOULDER ARMOR	
BLACK	41.99
H. KEY FOBS	
BLACK	14.95
RED	14.95

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SNELL 95 AND DOT APPROVED
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AGV GHOST HELMET

SNELL 95 AND DOT APPROVED
BLACK/GREEN/VIOLET SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AVAILABLE FROM **$199.99**

AGV PACIFIC HELMET

SNELL 95 AND DOT APPROVED
YELLOW/RED/BLUE SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AVAILABLE FROM **$149.99**

BIEFFE GPR HELMET

MEETS OR EXCEEDS SNELL AND DOT
BIAGGI SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AND REPLICAS AVAILABLE FROM **$260.99**

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MEETS OR EXCEEDS SNELL AND DOT
FLAT BLACK SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AVAILABLE **$219.99**

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BLACK/YELLOW SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AVAILABLE FROM **$129.99**

BIEFFE AIRTECH HELMET

MEETS OR EXCEEDS SNELL AND DOT
Y2 RED/BLK/PURP/SIL SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AVAILABLE FROM **$104.99**

BIEFFE B8 HELMET

MEETS OR EXCEEDS SNELL AND DOT
K1 WHT/BLUE/BLUE SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AVAILABLE FROM **$89.99**

BIEFFE B12R HELMET

MEETS OR EXCEEDS DOT
RED SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AVAILABLE FROM **$64.99**

BIEFFE BR19 HELMET

MEETS OR EXCEEDS DOT
YELLOW/GREY SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AVAILABLE FROM **$149.99**

KBC RUSH HELMET

SNELL 95 AND DOT APPROVED
BLACK/BLUE SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AVAILABLE FROM **$170.99**

KBC TK-7 HELMET

SNELL 95 AND DOT APPROVED
BLK/GREEN SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AVAILABLE FROM **$99.99**

SHOEI X-TEC HELMET

SNELL 95 AND DOT APPROVED
KATO TC-1 SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AND REPLICAS AVAILABLE FROM **$399.99**

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SNELL 95 AND DOT APPROVED
CRIVILLE TC-1 SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AND REPLICAS AVAILABLE FROM **$524.99**

SHOEI RF 800 HELMET

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CANDY APPLE RED METALLIC SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AVAILABLE FROM **$152.99**

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SNELL APPROVED
BLACK/BLUE SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AVAILABLE FROM **$89.99**

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SNELL AND DOT APPROVED
RED SHOWN, OTHER COLORS AVAILABLE **$79.99**

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FOG OFF
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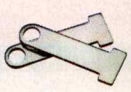

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AGV IMOLA JACKET
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$249.99

AGV SPORT 2 JACKET
WHT/RED/BLK, WHT/BLUE/BLK, BLK/GRY/GUN, BLACK
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AGV RIDER JACKET
BLACK
$159.99

AGV UNIVERSAL PANT
BLACK
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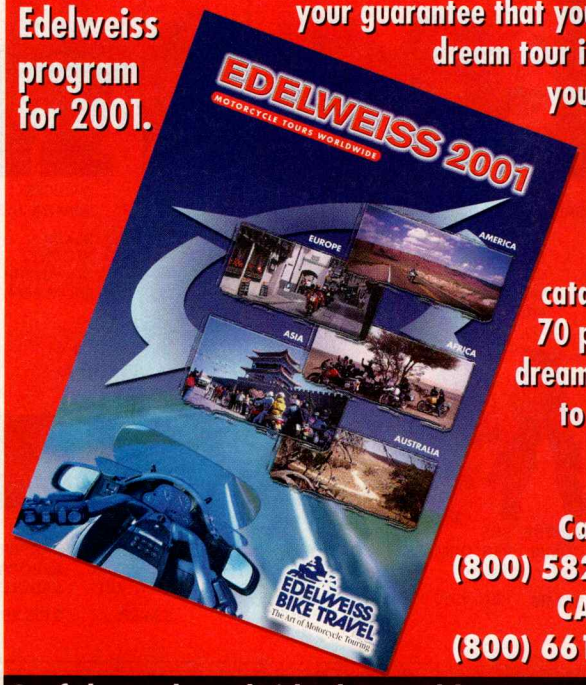

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backfires

continued from page 16

people) and tank knee pads. Triumph is catering to the modern, "soft-butt" riders by using a swingarm frame. Us O.F.s (old farts) must have had tougher butts because I rode thousands of miles between '47 and '70 and never had trouble with a hardtail. Thanks for the great write-up, though.

Ken Johnson
Apple Valley, CA

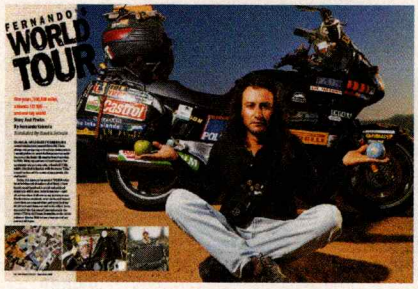
Thanks for the Bonneville development story, and thanks to Triumph for having the balls to allow an outsider into its R&D center. Good stuff! This is a story I've not seen done in 30 years of motorcycle magazine reading. I certainly hope to read more of them—though I suspect your competition is scrambling to jump on the "development story" bandwagon. Are Boehm and Cathcart presently working on any other yet-to-be-introduced new bikes?

Matt Smith
Via e-mail

Yes. Stay tuned. —Ed.

FERNANDO'S WORLD TOUR

Great feature in your November 2000 issue on Fernando's world tour! Please include things like that as often as possible. And give us follow-ups on Fernando's journey. Just awesome.



DEAN GROOVER

Travis Irvine
Fort Lauderdale, FL

Just when I thought that barstool bikers were taking over the motorcycle world, I read of the travels and travails of Fernando Valsesia. This is the best article I have read that addresses the question: "Why ride a motorcycle?"

Mike Fox
Carlsbad, CA

We appreciate your views and opinions. Send letters to BACKFIRES, *Motorcyclist*, 6420 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90048-5515, or fax them to (323) 782-2372. If you have Internet access, you can e-mail your thoughts to us at mcmail@emapusa.com. Letters must be signed and include your address and telephone number; however, we will withhold your name at your request. We reserve the right to edit letters for clarity and/or length. The views expressed here are not necessarily those of *Motorcyclist*. All materials sent to the editors will become the property of *Motorcyclist* and cannot be returned.

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X-tec Replica	CALL
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Call for low prices on all Shoei helmets not listed.

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Zeon

AGV Helmets

Q3X Anniversary	$438.95
Q3X Vent	from 378.95
Q3X Pro	from 337.95
Zeon	from 133.95
Strada	71.95
Aragon	from 171.95

We carry all AGV models.

DUNLOP

K491 Elite II

(rear)	
140/90HB15	$80.95
MV85HB15RWL	100.95
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MT90HB16RWL	85.95
MU90HB16RWL	91.95
160/60HB16	106.95
MT90HB17	80.95
MT90HB17RWL	89.95
110/90HB18	69.95
120/90HB18	70.95
(front)	
MT90HB16	$66.95
MT90HB16RWL	80.95
100/90H18	61.95
MR90H18RWL	76.95
130/70HB18	83.95
MM90H19	60.95
MM90H19RWL	61.95

K591 Elite SP

(rear)	
150/90V15	$60.95
130/90V16	79.95
140/90V16	87.95
150/80VB16	99.95
130/80V17	64.95
130/90V17	79.95
140/70VB17	89.95
160/70VB17	99.95
180/55VB17	91.95
110/90V18	63.95
120/90VB18	77.95
130/80V18	80.95
140/70VB18	80.95
(front)	
100/90V16	$58.95
120/80V16	65.95
110/80V17	79.95
100/80V18	65.95
100/90V18	65.95
110/80VB18	64.95
110/90V18	69.95
100/90V19	65.95

All Dunlop tires available.

Arai HELMETS

RX-7 RR3 Doohan Star

Arai Helmets

Quantum/f- solids	CALL
Quantum/f- replicas	CALL
RX-7 RR3- solids	CALL
RX-7 RR3- replicas	CALL
Renegade	CALL
Classic/e	CALL

Call for great prices! We have "hard to get" Arai helmets

BELL HELMETS

Legacy

Bell Helmets

Legacy	from $110.95
M-4	from 276.95
Star 1	from 82.95
Bell II	from 77.95
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All Bell helmets available.

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ME33 Lazer

(front)	
110/90V16	$86.95
120/80V16	88.95
110/80V17	86.95
120/70V17	90.95
90/90H18	61.95
100/90V18	83.95
110/80V18	72.95
110/90V18	88.95
3.25H19	63.95
3.25V19	73.95
3.50H19	70.95
100/90V19	87.95
110/90V19	76.95
80/90H21	88.95
90/90H21	88.95

ME880

(rear)	
140/80HB15	$97.95
140/90HB15	93.95
150/80HB15	99.95
150/90HB15	102.95
170/80HB15	108.95
180/70HB15	108.95
130/90HB16	88.95
140/90HB16	97.95
150/80HB16	109.95
160/80HR16	141.95
180/70HR16	166.95
240/50VR16	Avail. 5/00
160/70VR17	98.95
140/80HB17	123.95
160/70VB17	139.95
240/40VR18	Avail. 5/00
(front)	
130/90HB16	$76.95
150/80HB16	86.95
120/70VB17	79.95
120/80V17	80.95
150/80HR17	147.95
110/90H18	90.95
120/90H18	80.95
130/60VR-18	Avail. 5/00
130/70HR18	117.95
100/90H19	69.95
110/90H19	72.95
80/90H21	67.95

Hein Gericke

Leather Apparel

Concord Jacket	$324.95
Dakar Jacket	435.95
California II Black	304.95
V-Pilot Jacket	365.95
V-Pilot Pants	244.95
Boost Jacket	208.95
Boost Pants	169.95
Cybersport Jacket	178.95
Chaps	232.95
Boot Cut Jeans	222.95
Concord Gloves	47.95
Pilot Gloves	39.95
Concord Boots	113.95

First Gear line is not available.

BIEFFE

Airtech

Bieffe Helmets

BR-16 Classic	$182.95
BR-16 Multi	from 188.95
B-8 Classic	69.95
B-8 Multi	from 93.95
B-20 Classic	128.95
B-20 Multi	137.95
BR-19 Classic	143.95
BR-19 Multi	149.95
DGM Classic	76.95
B-12R Classic	67.95
B-12R Multi	59.95
Airtech	98.95

All Bieffe helmets and boots available.

NOLAN HELMETS

N100 Trend

Nolan Helmets

N100 Classic	from $182.95
N100 Trend	from 154.95
N40	from 97.95

We carry all Nolan helmets.

METZELER

ME Z2

(rear)	
150/80ZR16	$110.95
130/80HR17	109.95
140/80ZR17	109.95
170/60ZR18	126.95
(front)	
120/80ZR16	$88.95
110/80ZR17	88.95

ME Z4

(rear)	
150/70ZR17	$105.95
160/60ZR17	106.95
160/70ZR17	109.95
170/60ZR17	110.95
180/55ZR17A	112.95
190/50ZR17	130.95
160/60ZR18	113.95
(front)	
120/60ZR17	$86.95
120/70ZR17	87.95
120/70ZR17B	88.95
110/80ZR18	85.95
120/70ZR18	84.95

All Metzeler tires available.

AGVSPORT

Rage Suit

Apparel

Rage 1 Pc. Suit	$479.95
Spark 1 Pc. Suit	336.95
Rage 2 Pc. Suit	444.95
Sport II 2 Pc. Suit	385.95
Torino 2 Pc. Suit	449.95
Rage Jacket	237.95
Sport II Jacket	206.95
Imola Jacket	219.95
Universal Pants	179.95

AGV Boots

Model 585	$219.95
Model 580	191.95
Model 578	155.95
Sprint	85.95

AGV Gloves

Corsa	$37.95
RX1	33.95
RX2	31.95
RX3	41.95
Prisma	92.95

Prices may vary for larger sizes
We carry all AGV apparel.

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RS3 Race/Slip-on	CALL
Zyclone Racer/Slip-on	CALL
Pro Series 2	CALL
Duplex Race	CALL
Racing Only System	CALL

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Full Carbon System	CALL
Titanium Slip-On	CALL
Carbon Slip-On	CALL

LP Racing LOCKHART PHILLIPS USA

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Tank guards	from 31.95
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Adjust Swing Arm	$65.95
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Alum. Chain Guards fr.	35.95
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Body Parts	CALL

All Lockhart products available.

ST Pro Boot

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Alpinestar Boots

Bullet	$107.95
ST Pro	215.95
516 GP Tech	from 251.95
540.6 Tech	233.95
Stage Gore Tex	206.95

Alpinestar Gloves

ST3	$53.95
GX1	98.95
GPS	53.95

SPIDI

Scott 1pc. Suit	$951.95
Blade 2 pc. Suit	712.95
Net Jacket	215.95
Mask Jacket	259.95
Daytona Jacket	314.95
Street 987 Jacket	314.95
MTX Pants	201.95
Carboteck Gloves	125.95
Pro 1 Gloves	90.95

All SPIDI products available.

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S4 Systems	from $249.95
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We carry all Vance & Hines products.

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Prices may vary for some models. Call for items not listed.

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Ballistic Jacket

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Light Speed Gloves	33.95
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Rhino Boots	139.95

We carry all Joe Rocket products.

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Sport Tour Pants	107.95

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17 lt. Tail bag	60.95
SB34 Saddle bags	124.95

We have all Tour Master products.

TARGA

Lever Locks	from $29.95
Adj. Swing Arm Stand	87.95
Solo Seat Cowls	from 64.95
Body Parts	CALL
Tail Conversions	from 68.95
Wind Screens	from 37.95
Tank Covers	from 29.95

Battery Tender.....$37.95

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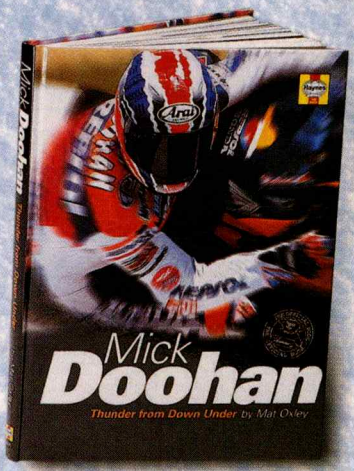
gear box

Compiled by Garrett Kai. Photography by James Brown

A holiday collection of gifts and goodies for your favorite motorcycle fan

Kushitani Hyper Racing Gloves

Protect your tender digits with Kushitani's new Hyper Racing gloves. The two-piece design provides superior protection and fit, as well as a complete wrist-gauntlet closure system. Hyper Racing gloves ($250) are constructed with high-quality calfskin leather, and are available in three color combinations to match most any riding wardrobe in sizes M–XL. Find out more by phone at (310) 921-0133 or go to www.kushitani.com.

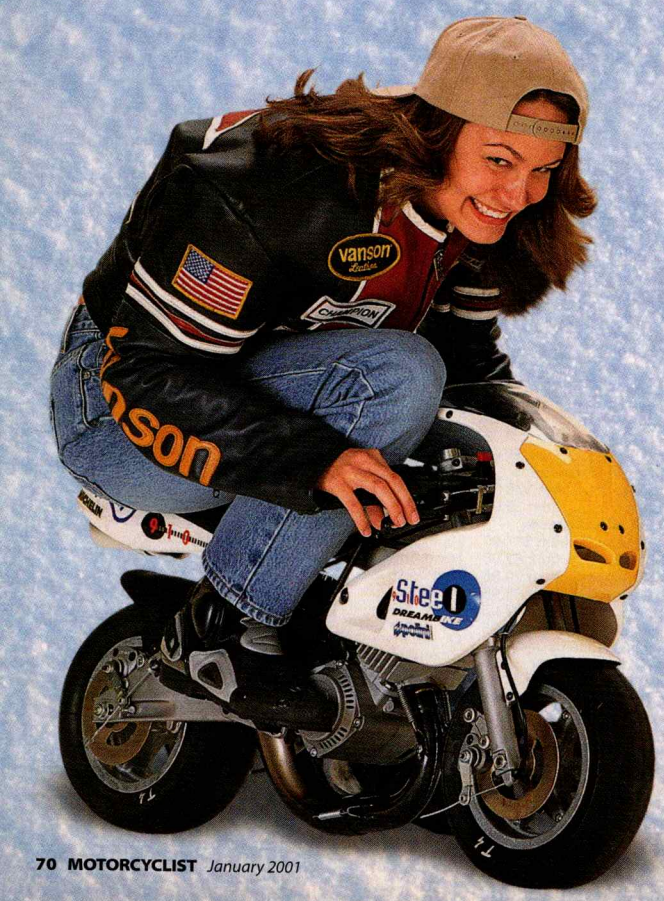


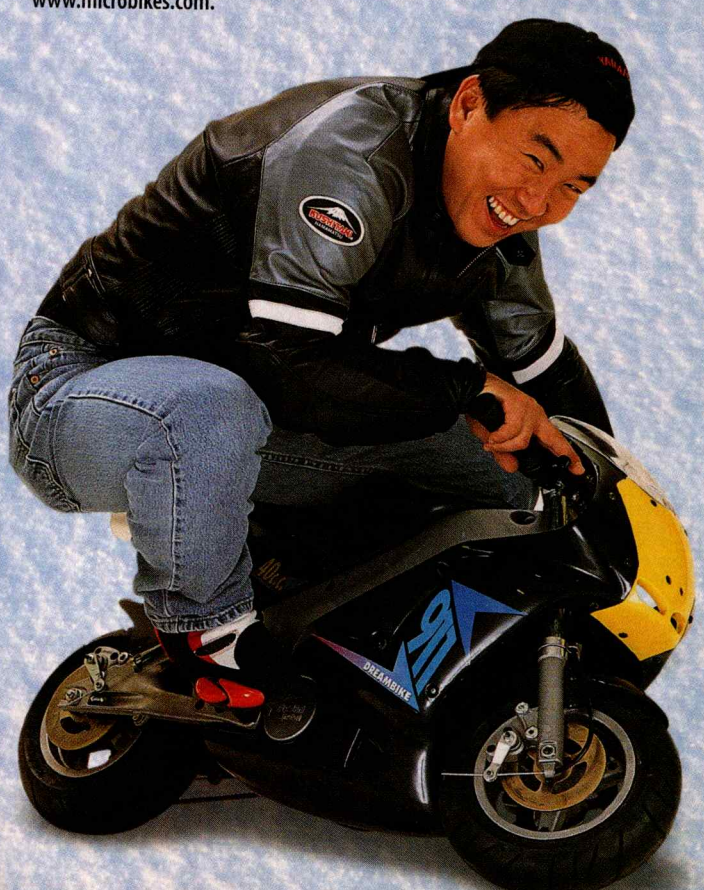
Be Like Mick!

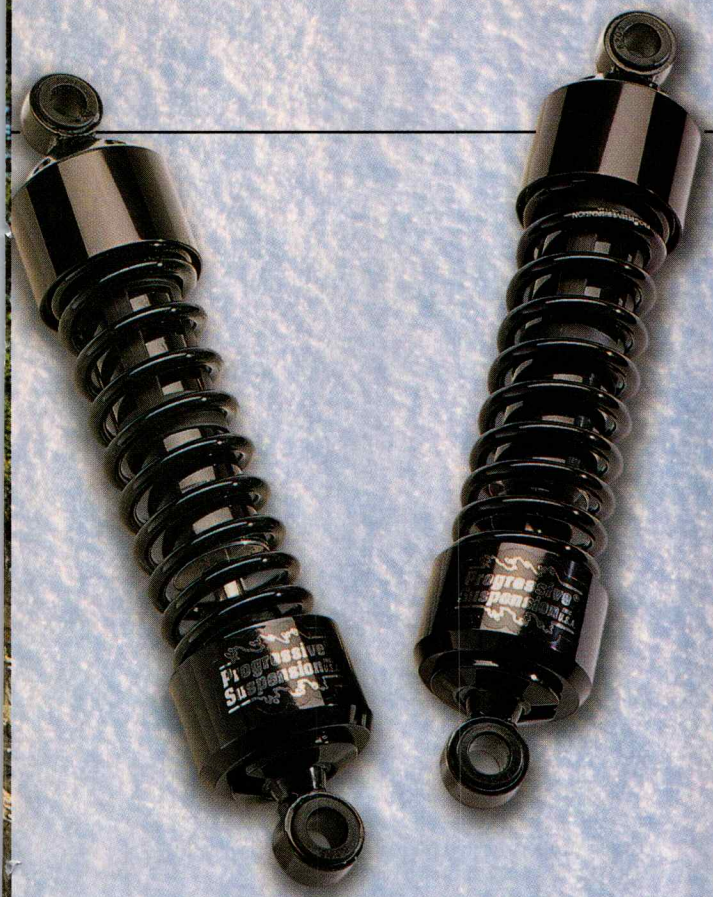
So you can't be just like Mick Doohan. But you can live vicariously through him as you read about the life of one of the greatest motorcycle racers of modern times in *Mick Doohan, Thunder From Down Under* by Mat Oxley (hardcover, 160 pages, $29.95). Follow Mick from his early childhood of racing RZ250's in the mid-'80s all the way through his five world championships. Pick up a copy at your nearest bookstore, through Whitehorse Press at (800) 531-1133, or visit www.whitehorsepress.com.

Polini Pocketbikes

Now we're getting serious about this gift-giving thing. Polini pocketbikes are imported from Italy and utilize two-stroke 40cc engines that crank out a whopping 6.2 horsepower. Polini offers a variety of mini-scoots for kids of all ages, including five different models in air- or water-cooled versions. The centrifugal clutch and plastic fairings make them great to learn on, and are guaranteed to make someone very happy this holiday season. Prices start at $1233 each. Dial (858) 587-6633 or see the complete line of Polini pocketbikes at www.microbikes.com.





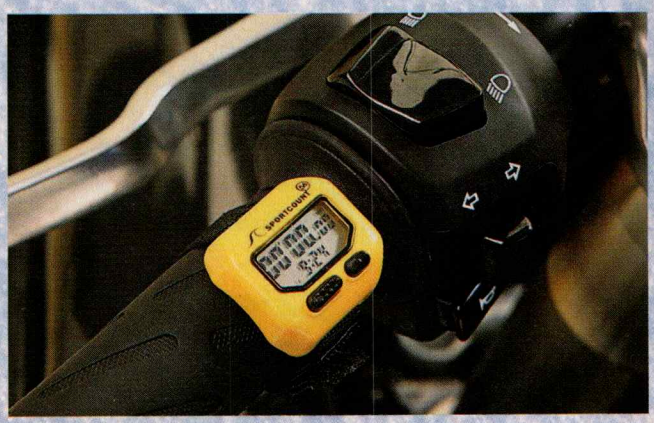


Spring Into Action

Update your cruiser with the latest high-performance 440 Inertia Active System (IAS) shocks from Progressive Suspension. The 440 Series shocks retail for $495 a pair, and utilize what Progressive calls a "patented valve," which has two independent rebound circuits. The two circuits, one for smooth riding conditions and one for rough riding conditions, are said to offer improved handling and comfort. Been really good this year? Maybe Santa will give you a set. If not, give Progressive a call at (760) 948-4012 or log on at www.progressivesuspension.com.

Alpinestars Tech Pack Backpack

Whether you're lugging Christmas gifts for your friends or goodies for yourself, the Alpinestars Tech Pack ($139) can be a great help during the holidays. The Tech Pack features a spacious main compartment, an aerodynamic design and a unique helmet harness system. And the shoulder harness makes sure the unit stays secure when riding. Available in black/red only. For more information check with your local dealer, call Alpinestars at (310) 891-0222 or surf www.alpinestars.com.



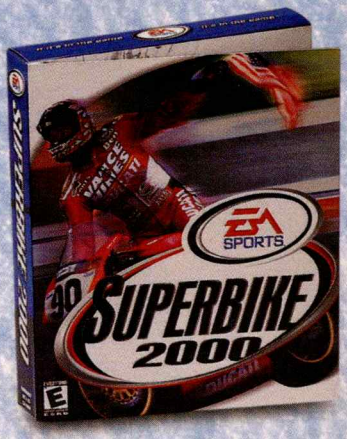
Sportcount Lap Timer

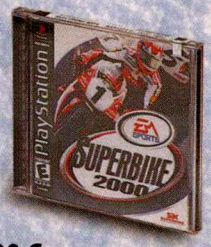
Everything seems to be self-serve these days: getting cash, soft drinks, whatever. Now, keeping track of your own lap times is easier than ever before thanks to Sportcount. Sportcount's lap timers ($29.95–$39.95) are sized to fit easily onto your bike's handgrip and attach with handy elastic/hook-and-loop straps. The units feature large buttons and display your split time, fastest lap, average lap time and even your slowest lap (just don't tell anyone!). Give Sportcount a call at (800) LAP-COUNT or check out www.sportcount.com.

Alpinestars GP Tech Boots

No, you probably won't be winning any World Superbike races, but you can have comfort and protection just like the world's best road racers. The top-of-the-line GP Tech is loaded with features, including an exclusive ankle protection system, carbon-fiber shin plate and a proven ventilation system. The latest in Alpinestars booties are available in five color combos and replica versions in men's sizes 39–48 for $289.95. Check out your local dealer or call Alpinestars at (310) 891-0222; www.alpinestars.com.

gear box





EA Sports Superbike 2000 Game

Listen up, all you armchair superbike racers. Here's your chance to show us what you've got with the latest in video game simulations: Superbike 2000 from EA Sports. Wanna-be Haga-sans can choose from 20 Superbike riders, 13 racing circuits and six manufacturers from the 1999 SBK season. Superbike 2000 is available for your PC ($39.95) or Playstation system ($49.95) in equally challenging versions. Check your local toy store, contact EA sports for more information at (877) 324-2637, or surf www.eastore.ea.com.

Get Real

Kushitani's Real Ride sport-touring two-piece suit ($820) is the latest offering from the Hamamatsu-based company. The Real Ride boasts 1.6mm leather construction and K-foam protection in the shoulders, elbows and forearms. Other features include three front zippered pockets and an adjustable waist belt. The Real Ride suits are available in three colors and in sizes XS–XXL. Find out more about Kushitani riding and racing apparel by calling (310) 921-0133 or check out www.kushitani.com.

Harley-Davidson Roadtool

You can't take your entire toolbox with you, but you can bring the Harley-Davidson Roadtool. This multipurpose gadget has what you need to cut, open or twist most anything you'll encounter while two-wheel trekking or just hanging around. Included is a magnetic bit set, serrated knife blade, three screwdrivers, coarse- and fine-tooth file, an awl, needlenose pliers, and a can opener. This compendium of handiness is available for $69.95, a price that even includes a carrying pouch. Visit your Harley-Davidson dealer, call (800) 443-2153, or point your mouse to www.harley-davidson.com.

Pro Grip Chrome Tank Pad

Protecting your bike's fuel tank from scratches and the belt-buckle grindage is a big deal for most enthusiasts. Make sure you keep your bike's tank scratch-free with the Chrome Tank Pad from Pro Grip. The self-adhesive backing makes installation a snap, and who can argue with chrome stuff these days? The pads are available in two sizes (small $7.95, large $8.95); get them either through Lockhart Phillips dealers or call LP USA at (800) 221-7291. Webheads can find them at www.lockhartphillipsusa.com.

Lockhart Phillips Flush Mount IV Iridium Marker Lights

In a world where smaller is better, LP's Flush Mount IV marker lights ($19.95) definitely fit the bill. The flush-mount design is now offered in smaller sizes with multicolored iridium lenses, and features easy, no-drilling installation and OEM-style connectors. The entire range of LP USA marker lights are available for your perusal at www.lockhartphillipsusa.com, or call (800) 221-7291.

Wax On...Wax Off...Wax On...

Keep your bike's chrome parts clean and shiny this winter with the latest in chrome polishing goodies from Griot's Garage. The folks at Griot's have everything you need, including Chrome Polish ($11.95), 100% Cotton Disposable Wipes ($12.95) and Mag Wheel Polish ($13.95) for restoring any less-than-perfect chrome pieces. Satisfy your obsessive-compulsive cleaning needs and call Griot's Garage at (800) 345 5789 or visit them on the Web at www.griotsgarage.com.

GP Tech Camera Mount

People, people...*Survivor* audition tapes aren't the only use for a video camera, you know. Mount your camcorder to your bike and record things you actually want to *watch*, like a Sunday ride though the hills or maybe a section of your favorite twisty road. The GP Tech Camera Mount is constructed of billet aluminum and offers suction-cup mounting for reduced vibration and a secure hold. Just $95.99—and a great alternative to blankets and duct tape. Start your Christmas shopping early with GP Tech at (561) 988-7390 or www.gptechllc.com.

gear box

Tsubaki Alpha Gold O-Ring Chain

No, you can't use it to decorate your Christmas tree. You can, however, harness your bike's horsepower in a highly shiny way with Tsubaki's Alpha Gold O-Ring Chain. Tsubaki's new links are prestretched for increased life, while "Superseal" O-rings keep the nasty stuff out while keeping the high-viscosity grease in. Tsubaki Alpha Gold chains are available in 520, 525 and 530 sizes, starting at $85.87. To find out more check with your local dealer, or contact Tsubaki chain's motorcycle division at www.ustsubaki.com.

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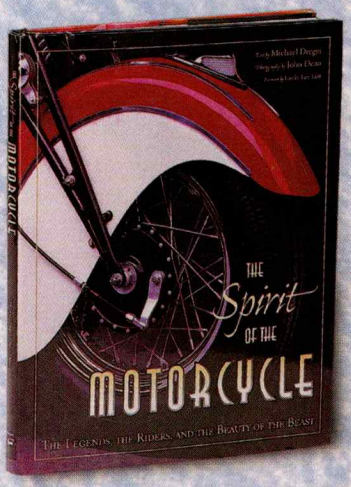
AN EXCLUSIVE FORMULA DEVELOPED BY MOTION PRO TO PROVIDE THE SMOOTHEST OPERATION AND LONGEST CABLE LIFE!
SHAKE WELL BEFORE USE
DANGER: EXTREMELY FLAMMABLE CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE VAPORS HARMFUL. HARMFUL OR FATAL IF SWALLOWED.
NET WT 6oz.

Motion Pro Cable Care

Stuck or dry cables are a no-no on your motorcycle. So keep your cables in perfect condition with Motion Pro's Cable Luber ($9.80) and Cable Lube ($7.95). The simple design clamps over the end of your cable housing and allows the aerosol lubricant to be injected into the cable housing. Once the lubricant runs out the far end your lube-job is done, making everything work in a top-notch manner. Check with your local dealer, give 'em a call at (650) 329-0427, or go to www.motionpro.com.

Better Than A Fruitcake

We've received some interesting gifts over the years, but this is definitely better than a fruitcake. Whitehorse Press is again offering this solid-chocolate motorcycle for that special motorcyclist in your life. Created from Bavarian chocolate, the unique gift is hand-poured into solid nine-ounce treats. The $15.95 chocolate motorcycles are available gift-wrapped for a limited time and can be ordered at (800) 531-1133 or on the Web at www.whitehorsepress.com.



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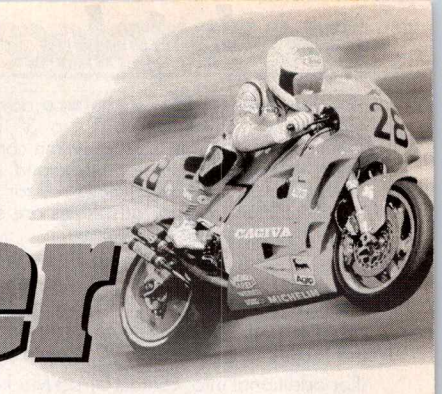

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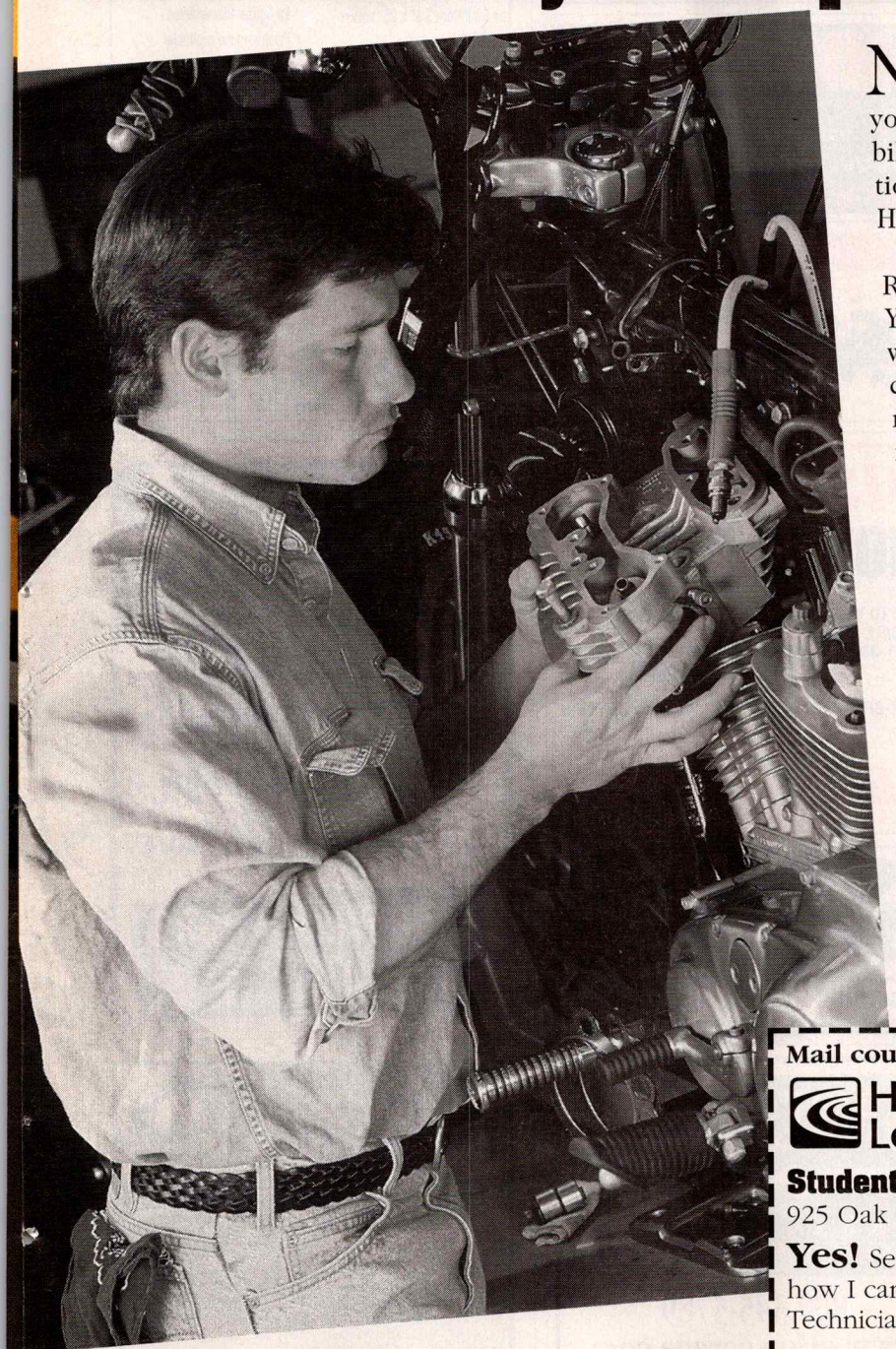

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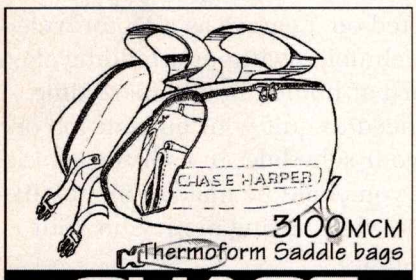

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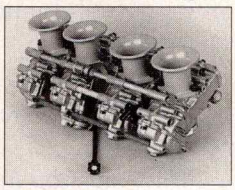

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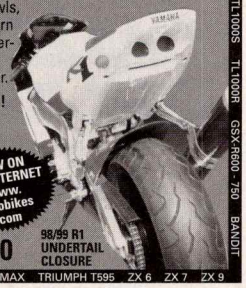

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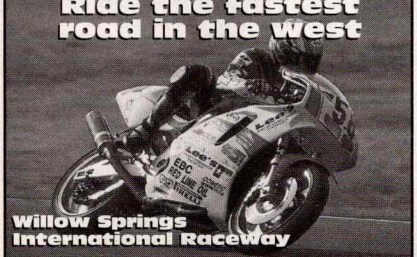
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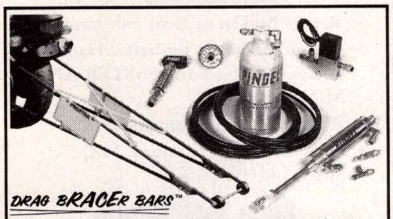

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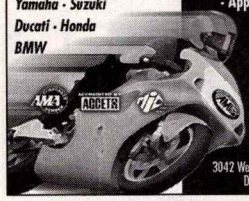

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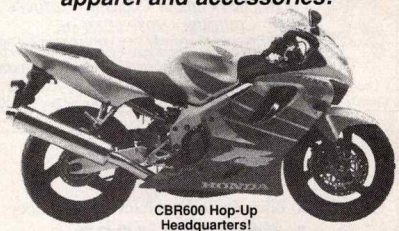

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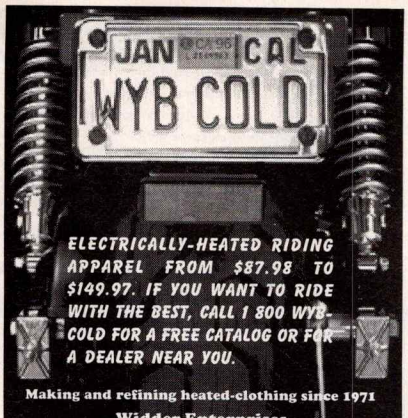

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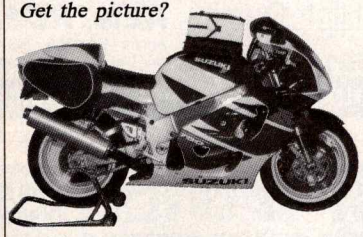
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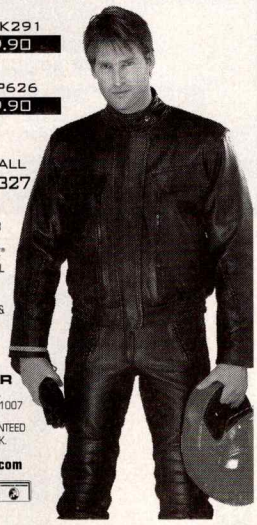

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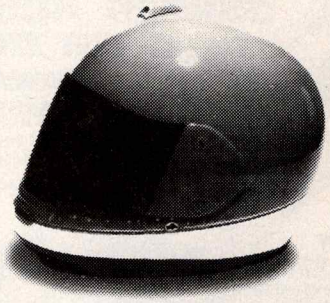
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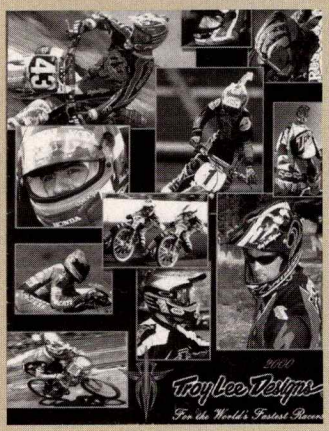

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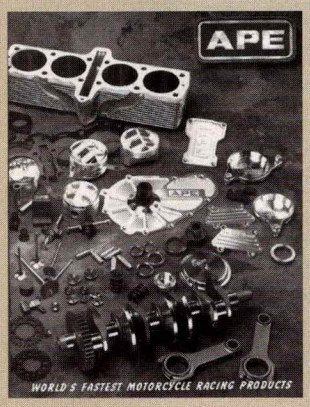

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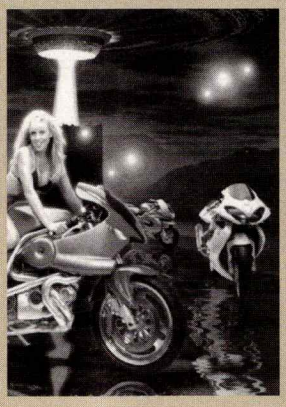

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b. Paid and/or requested circulation:		
1. Paid/requested outside-county mail subscriptions stated on Form 3541	194,338	196,820
2. Paid in-county subscriptions stated on Form 3541	0	0
3. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other non-USPS paid distribution	65,793	65,000
4. Other classes mailed through the USPS	0	0
c. Total paid and/or requested circulation	260,131	261,820
d. Free distribution by mail		
1. Outside-county as stated on Form 3541	997	918
2. In-county as stated on Form 3541	0	0
3. Other classes mailed through the USPS	0	0
e. Free distribution outside the mail	0	0
f. Total free distribution	997	918
g. Total distribution	261,128	262,738
h. Copies not distributed:	131,675	122,503
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16. This statement of ownership will be printed in the January 2001 issue of this publication. ☐ Check box if not required to publish.
17. Signature and title of editor, publisher, business manager or owner.
    10/03/00 Date — John Baillie, Vice President and CFO

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COMING SOON
In the February 2001 issue of

SPORT RIDER MAGAZINE

On Sale December 5

FIRST RIDE: SUZUKI'S NEW FUEL-INJECTED GSX-R600!
Slashing apexes with Suzuki's new fuelie featherweight 600. Will it be the new king?

Plus: GSX-R600 vs. R6. Where do they stand?

SIMS ENGINEERING'S SUPER KAWASAKI ZX-9R
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Sport Rider goes inside the world of dynamometers to reveal how each one works, and what its data means to you

SUPER WILD SUZUKI TL1000Rs
An up-close look at two incredibly trick Suzuki V-twins: Lockhart's pet project bike and ProFab's insane track-day shredder

PIT-PASS: *SPORT RIDER* GOES PRO THUNDER!
The Editor goes up against the AMA National field at Willow Springs on our Ducati 748R test bike

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The *Sport Rider* staff enters the Willow Springs 24-Hour Endurance race on a GSX-R750 and lives to tell about it

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the real world

Edited By Marc Cook

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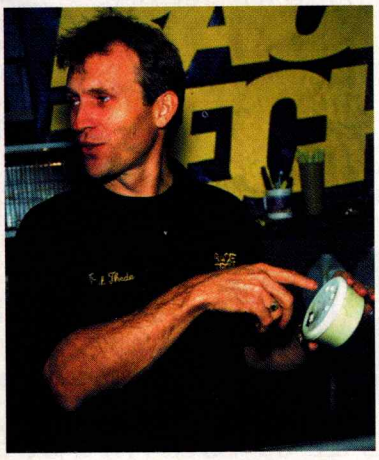
Plush, not mush

Race Tech's Paul Thede talks about the "perfect ride"

INDUSTRY INSIDER

AS RACERS AND TUNERS, WE TALK A LOT ABOUT the "perfect ride" in terms of the balance between suspension control and compliance. There are three major areas that contribute to the perfect ride. First, we want a plush ride—we don't want to get beat up over sharp-edge stuff or Bott's dots. Second, you want a firm-feeling ride. That is, you don't want to have your suspension set up so that it dives dramatically on the brakes or feels mushy and loose. Naturally, items one and two are somewhat at odds with each other, at least in conventional thinking about suspension setup. Third, you want to maximize traction. If you have all three of these things, everything else is just a matter of minor adjustments.



MARC COOK

Many riders find it difficult to believe that suspension can be compliant *and* controlled and that, conversely, suspension can be mushy *and* harsh. How's that? The Gold Wing is a good example. It's a big, softly sprung motorcycle that uses a lot of its suspension travel and feels like a big, mushy pillow. But I also maintain that it's harsh. Hit an expansion joint and you get a big shock right through the bars. That's harsh to me.

Start your quest for the perfect ride by setting up the stock suspension. Change one thing at a time and write down where the settings are right now. On most bikes, when you click those damping adjusters in, you're putting a tapered needle into an orifice, so zero is all the way in. (Consult your manual to be sure this his how your bike works.) Take the settings you have now and count the clicks into the zero point, and then return to those settings. Make sure you have measured and set your static sag. [See sidebar.] Then make a change on one adjuster at a time by, say, two clicks. Ride it and see if you can notice a difference. To check yourself, go back to the original setting to ensure that the change you made was in the right direction.

A couple of clicks isn't usually going to be such a big change that you're going to get yourself into trouble or make the bike handle dangerously. Remember that as you slow the rebound damping, you will get two things—it'll typically be a harsher ride and you'll begin to lose traction. Some sportbikes have enough rebound damping available at maximum settings to really mess you up. Which leads to this common misconception: Most people think that the faster you ride the slower your rebound damping needs to be. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Also, keep in mind that just because you have adjusters on the suspension doesn't mean that you have complete control of internal damping rates. Generally, by fine-tuning the damping settings on your stock suspension, you'll be able to make an improvement on the order of only five or 10 percent.

A question I hear often is: Why isn't stock suspension awesome right out of the box? You should understand that developing a motorcycle requires a thousand tasks, and suspension tuning is just one of those. The manufacturers have both time and budget constraints. Complicating the picture is the fact that the bikes are often set up by one kind of rider with one kind of riding style, and he's not even tuning for himself—he's tuning for the "average" rider. (Whoever that is!) A bike set up for a 150-pound rider will have spring and damping rates out of the ballpark for a 220-pounder. I would say most sportbikes are dramatically under sprung on the front end.

This is the reason you will want to consider suspension modification. We (or other tuners) can go in and modify the suspension (the fork is easy and most sportbike shocks can be rebuilt) and match the spring and damping rates to your riding level and weight. Modern cartridge forks and high-end shocks can be tuned for that perfect ride, while even a damping-rod fork, with our Cartridge Emulator, can be made plush. I encourage people to call us or check out our Web site (www.racetech.com) to find out what kind of spring rates we recommend as a baseline and what kinds of modifications are available.

It's important to remember that a controlled ride doesn't mean one with racetrack-spec spring rates and super-hard damping. We have suspension for a reason—because there are bumps out there—and the suspension needs to have the freedom to stroke and use its travel to absorb those bumps. Ideally, you will use nearly all the suspension travel in normal hard riding, leaving a margin for a really nasty bump, but with controlled damping so that the bike doesn't feel loose or mushy.

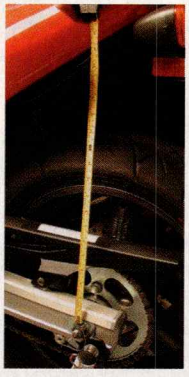
Suspension tuning is a tremendously subjective issue. I have a favorite saying: The best you've ridden is the best you know. Unless you've ridden a bike with perfect suspension, you can't know how good or bad your bike's is. So while I'm keen on having riders experiment with the stock suspension, getting to know the bike and its limitations, I'll bet that if they had a chance to ride a bike that's been carefully and properly modified, they'll never go back to stock again. —*Paul Thede*

Sag Rules

Starting with the right baseline settings makes all the difference

EVERY RACER AND HARD-CORE SPORTY TYPE takes the time to do one thing that helps make the baseline for other suspension changes far more reliable—measuring and setting static sag. Put simply, this is a measurement of how much of the bike's suspension travel is used by the combined weight of bike and rider.

Start by measuring the fully extended length of the suspension by some easy reference; make sure you use something solid like a frame rail rather than a plastic bit. A tie-wrap on the fork leg is helpful. Suit up in your normal riding attire (including helmet) and hop on the bike. Have your helper support the bike and get settled. Have him compress the suspension slightly and let it rebound. Take a measurement. Next, have him lift the bike slightly and let it settle. Take another measurement. Average these two. (This method helps reduce stiction error.) The difference between the laden and fully extended measurements is your static sag.



For racebikes, Race Tech recommends 25 to 30mm of sag, or about 25 percent of the total travel. For streetbikes, it says to use 30 to 35mm, or up to 33 percent of total travel. If you get less than the recommended static sag, you've got too much preload or too high a total spring rate. Try reducing spring preload to obtain the target sag. If you get more than the target sag, the springs are too soft or have too little preload. Try increasing preload to hit the marks. Also, watch for the balance of these measurements. For streetbikes you'll want the static sags to be the same front and rear.

Smart Money

SUZUKI VX800, 1990–1993

- **Cheer: Comfortable, decent-handling standard**
- **Jeer: Complex engine encourages owners to ignore maintenance**
- **Verdict: An all-around standard lacking only personality**

In the late 1980s, the motorcycle press bemoaned the loss of the "standard" motorcycle. Suzuki responded with the VX800, a naked bike based on the company's V-twin Intruder cruiser. *Cycle* called it "the anti-Harley." The bike provided a comfortable riding position, decent handling and good performance from its torquey 800cc V-twin. Maintaining the eight-valve, liquid-cooled engine can be a bit tricky, but should not be ignored. Otherwise, a very reliable and competent motorcycle. Expect to pay between $2000 and $2500 for a clean example.

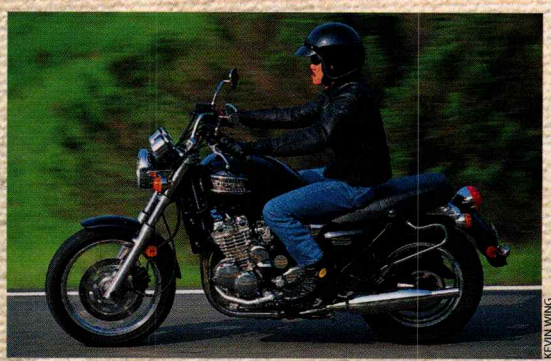
HONDA GL1500 GOLD WING, 1988–2000

- **Cheer: Ultrareliable, ultracomfortable, ultraeverything**
- **Jeer: Leviathanlike size and weight, hinky high-speed handling**
- **Verdict: Best two-up heavyweight tourer on the market (until now)**

The mighty six-cylinder GL1500 Gold Wing is big, powerful and perhaps the most comfortable motorcycle on the road. Handling becomes interesting when speeds hit the 100-mph mark, but rapid transit isn't the bike's forte anyway. It's all about sitting there above a silky-smooth opposed-six, watching the countryside roll by. The bike is especially adept at two-up touring, and that's what matters to most Wingers. The 1988 model had some carburetion and electrical gremlins, but otherwise this is probably the most troublefree motorcycle you're likely to own. Prices range from $5700 for a stripper Interstate (no electric reverse) to $15,600 for a 2000 SE.

TRIUMPH THUNDERBIRD 900, 1995–2000

- **Cheer: Reliable and easy to maintain**
- **Jeer: Lowball suspension and brakes and high weight**
- **Verdict: An honest (if somewhat unexciting) alternative cruiser**



KEVIN WING

Triumph calls the Thunderbird a cruiser, but it's (almost) plain styling veers it in the direction of a standard. The 900cc triple delivers plenty of torque, but it's not very responsive in stock form. Never fear—it takes well to modifications. A few bits off a Speed Triple should do the trick, and a pipe unleashes a delicious three-cylinder wail. Other than cheesy fasteners and hardware, Triumphs from this era have proven reliable. A nice used example should run between $5200 and $8000.

Thanks to Lewis and Barb Lakey of Roy's Repair in Minneapolis, MN, for the technical advice. Used prices are from the AMA Official Motorcycle Value Guide, and reflect full retail value for original or reconditioned, well-maintained motorcycles.

doin' time

KEVIN WING

Honda CBR929RR

Building Baba's Baby Better

- *Ringleader*: **Tim Carrithers**
- *MSRP*: **$9999**
- *Miles*: **3600–4220**
- *Average Fuel Mileage*: **38.5**
- *Modifications*: **Leo Vinci half exhaust system and Intuitive Racing Products Ebony frame sliders**

LONG-TERM

AS FAR AS LIFE WITH A 122.7-HORSEPOWER MOTORcycle can be called uneventful, the last few months on our CBR929RR long-term beast have been exactly that. The mildly insidious buzz inflicting the clip-ons remains so. The stock Michelin Pilot Sports still show plenty of meat, and more discerning testers note the initial signs of damping degradation in the front and rear suspension, making wheel control slightly less accurate than when the bike was new.

With 4220 miles showing on the CBR's LCD odometer, mechanical fiddling has been limited to a spritz of chain lube every 500 miles or so and an oil change at 3000 miles. Armed with the requisite 3.9 quarts of Pro Honda GN4 10w30 oil (less slippery than Honda's HP4 and supposedly less prone to induce clutch slippage under combat conditions) and a regulation Honda filter, we sallied forth. Thanks to a wrench-friendly engine bay, the whole job takes maybe 25 minutes. Strapped to the dyno, our sufficiently broken-in 929 spat out 65.7 foot-pounds of torque at 9000 rpm, followed by 126 horses at 11,000—that's 1.8 foot-pounds and 3.3 horses more than it did when new. Still more proof that mileage makes you strong.

Leo Vinci Half Exhaust System

Since the toolbox was open anyway, we bolted up a pair of Ebony frame sliders from Intuitive Racing Products (www.IntuRace.com or call 949/586-0514). Pavement contact has been limited to the Michelins so far, but at $49.95 these things are the best prophylactic policy against bashed-in bodywork we've seen.

Never happy to leave well enough alone, we also bolted up a high-mount Leo Vinci half exhaust system that showed up in a big box from Indigo Sports ($549 via www.leovinciamerica.com or call 770/719-3800). Bolting up just aft of the 929's HTEV exhaust valve trickery, Leo Vinci's high-mount system looks spiffy, but requires replacing the standard rear turn signals with a pair of mini-stalk turn signals from Lockhart-Phillips ($12.95 from www.lockhartphillipsusa.com or call 800/221-7291). Thus fortified, the 929's torque curve jumped to 66.8 foot-pounds at the same 9000 rpm, and horsepower swells to a crescendo of 129.4 at 11,250 rpm. Exhaust music is socially acceptable, and the whole bike looks much cooler than before. What's next? New tires are on the agenda after another 2000 miles or so. From there, stay tuned. —*T.C.*

BMW R1150GS

- *Ringleader:* **Cook**
- *Miles:* **4000–4000**

MARC COOK

In the boxcar-like *Motorcyclist* shop, the R-GS has sat forlorn and shockless as the technicians at Penske Shocks build a set of high-end dampers for our Beemer. Because Penske doesn't have GS shocks on the menu, we sent the original pieces so they can cook something up. Nothing terribly wrong with the stock shocks, actually, but we wanted to see how really good bits work. You *know* we can't wait to find out. —*M.C.*

BUELL S3T

- *Ringleader:* **Holmstrom**
- *Miles:* **5700–7400**

BRIAN J. NELSON

At 6400 miles, the rear brake pads on our S3T had worn halfway through their backings and the rear disc was nearly shot. We replaced the pads, along with both front and rear tires, which—along with a major service—ran $544.71. Before the next report we plan to replace both brake discs (the front is warped), and we're going to mount the post-recall shock. —*D.H.*

HARLEY-DAVIDSON ELECTRA GLIDE STANDARD

- *Ringleader:* **Smith**
- *Miles:* **5900–7400**

No news continues to be great news, as the McQuide Glide rolls up heavy mileage without a hiccup. This month it pounded up to Reno for Street Vibrations, the annual Harley-heavy festival of music, metal and motorcycles. We noted that a taller cruising gear might be nice, to drop the revs at spirited speeds.—*K.S.*

TRIUMPH TT600

- *Ringleader:* **Boehm**
- *Miles:* **3200–3700**

KEVIN WING

As we reported last month, our TT600 test bike runs quite a bit better than it did early on. Problem is, the bike isn't being overly consistent about it. Sometimes it starts easily and runs cleanly off the bottom, sometimes it doesn't. It's also exhibiting a tendency to hiccup when being leaned over in a slow corner, such as when you'd make a 90-degree right-hander at a stoplight. Fixes are on the way, we hear. We'll keep you posted. —*M.B.*

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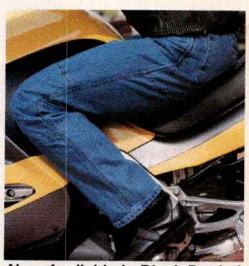

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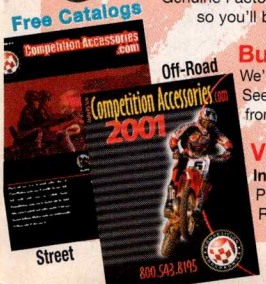

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RSV Mille	$13,500	sport	l/c 8v 998 V-twin	6/chain	416	31.6	56.2	24.5/95	5.2
SL1000	$11,299	sport	l/c 8v 998 V-twin	6/chain	418	32.0	56.2	24.5/100	5.4
RS250 Challenge	$8400	sport	l/c 2st 249 V-twin	6/chain	308	33.0	53.7	25.5/102	5.0
RS50	$3500	sport	l/c 2st 50 V-twin	6/chain	308	31.9	50.4	24.0/102	3.4
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YB11	$20,250	sport	l/c 20v 1002 inline-four	6/chain	403	30.3	56.3	NA/NA	4.0
DB4	$18,550	sport	a/c 4v 904 V-twin	6/chain	364	31.5	53.9	23.0/91	5.3
DB3 Mantra	$18,530	sport	a/c 4v 904 V-twin	6/chain	379	NA	53.9	NA/NA	6.3
BMW 300 CHESTNUT RIDGE ROAD WOODCLIFF LAKE, NJ 07575; 201/333–9999 WWW.BMWUSA.COM									
K1200LT	$19,200	touring	l/c 16v 1171 inline-four	5/shaft	834	30.3	64.3	26.8/NA	6.1
K1200RS	$16,700	sport-touring	l/c 16v 1171 inline-four	6/shaft	628	30.3	61.0	22.3/124	5.5
R1200CE	$15,100	cruiser	a-o/c 8v 1170 opposed-twin	5/shaft	686	29.1	64.9	29.5/134	4.5
R1200C	$14,500	cruiser	a-o/c 8v 1170 opposed-twin	5/shaft	686	29.1	64.9	29.5/134	4.5
R1100RT	$16,190	sport-touring	a-o/c 8v 1085 opposed-twin	5/shaft	563	30.7	58.5	27.2/122	6.6
R1150GS	$14,190	dual-sport	a-o/c 8v 1130 opposed-twin	6/shaft	530	33.1	59.4	27.1/114.3	5.5
R1100S	$15,600	sport	a-o/c 8v 1085 opposed-twin	6/shaft	504	29.9	58.2	25.0/100	4.8
R1100R	$11,990	standard	a-o/c 8v 1085 opposed-twin	5/shaft	518	33.2	57.9	25.5/120	5.5
F650GS	$8100	dual-sport	l/c 4v single	5/chain	425	30.7	58.5	28.1/113	4.4
BUELL 3700 WEST JUNEAU AVENUE MILWAUKEE, WI 53208; 414/343–8400 WWW.BUELL.COM									
Thunderbolt S3/S3T	$12,799	sport-touring	a/c 4v 1203 V-twin	5/belt	465	29.5	55.0	24.5/97	5.4
Lightning X1	$10,599	sport	a/c 4v 1203 V-twin	5/belt	440	29.5	55.0	23.0/89	4.6
Cyclone M2	$8599	sport	a/c 4v 1203 V-twin	5/belt	435	29.5	55.0	24.5/97	5.0
Blast	$4395	standard	a/c 2v 492 single	5/belt	360	27.5	55.3	25.0/86	2.8
CAGIVA 1901 DAVISVILLE ROAD WILLOW GROVE, PA 19090; 215/830–3300 WWW.CAGIVAUSA.COM									
Gran Canyon	$8995	dual-sport	a/c 4v 904 V-twin	6/chain	458	33.2	59.8	27.5/91	5.3
DUCATI 237 WEST PARKWAY POMPTON PLAINS, NJ 07444; 973/839–2600 WWW.DUCATIUSA.COM									
996S/996	$16,495	sport	l/c 8v 996 V-twin	6/chain	412/436	31.1	55.5	23.3-24.3/91-97	4.4
ST4	$14,695	sport-touring	l/c 8v 916 V-twin	6/chain	473	32.3	56.3	24.0/102	5.5
748S/748	$12,495	sport	l/c 8v 748 V-twin	6/chain	432	31.1	55.5	24.3/97	4.4
ST2	$12,495	sport-touring	l/c 4v 944 V-twin	6/chain	460	32.3	56.3	24.0/102	5.5
Supersport 900	$10,995	sport	a/c 4v 904 V-twin	6/chain	414	32.2	54.9	24.0/100	4.1
Monster 900	$10,495	standard	a/c 4v 904 V-twin	6/chain	407	30.3	56.3	23.0/104	4.2
Monster Dark	$9995	standard	a/c 4v 904 V-twin	6/chain	407	30.3	56.3	23.0/104	4.2
Supersport 750	$8995	sport	a/c 4v 748 V-twin	5/chain	403	32.0	55.3	24.0/96	4.1
Monster 750/Dark	$6995	standard	a/c 4v 748 V-twin	5/chain	392	30.3	56.3	23.0/94	4.2
EXCELSIOR-HENDERSON 805 HANLON DRIVE BELLE PLAINE, MN 56011; 612/873–7000 WWW.EXCELSIOR-HENDERSON.COM									
Super X	$18,900	cruiser	a-o/c 8v 1386 V-twin	5/belt	647	26.5	62.9	30.0/159	5.7
HARLEY-DAVIDSON 3700 WEST JUNEAU AVENUE MILWAUKEE, WI 53208; 414/343–4680 WWW.HARLEY-DAVIDSON.COM									
Electra Glide Ultra	$18,630	touring	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	788	27.3	63.5	26.0/156	5.0
Electra Glide Classic	$15,445	touring	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	776	27.3	63.5	26.0/156	5.0
Road King Classic	$16,490	touring	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	710	26.9	63.5	26.0/156	5.0
Road Glide	$15,270	touring	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	731	26.9	63.5	26.0/156	5.0
Road King	$15,220	touring	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	723	27.3	63.5	26.0/156	5.0
Electra Glide Standard	$13,130	touring	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	758	27.3	63.5	26.0/156	5.0
Heritage Springer	$17,370	cruiser	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	716	27.3	63.5	26.0/156	5.0
Heritage Softail	$15,995	cruiser	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	696	25.4	64.5	32.0/147	5.0
Softail Deuce	$15,995	cruiser	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	645	26.0	66.6	34.0/127	4.9
Springer Softail	$15,460	cruiser	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	653	25.8	65.4	32.0/135	5.0
Dyna Wide Glide	$15,395	cruiser	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	612	26.8	66.1	32.0/130	5.2
Fat Boy	$15,280	cruiser	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	666	25.5	64.5	32.0/147	5.0
Dyna Convertible	$14,700	cruiser	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	640	27.8	63.9	28.0/104	4.9
Night Train	$14,415	cruiser	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	630	25.2	66.9	34.0/127	5.0
Dyna Low Rider	$14,330	cruiser	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	614	26.5	65.5	32.0/130	4.9
Dyna Sport	$13,450	cruiser	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	619	27.2	63.2	28.0/104	4.9
Softail Standard	$12,355	cruiser	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	630	26.1	66.9	34.0/127	5.0
Dyna Super Glide	$11,245	cruiser	a/c 4v 1450 V-twin	5/belt	612	26.5	62.5	28.0/104	4.9
Sportster 1200C	$8795	cruiser	a/c 4v 1200 V-twin	5/belt	491	27.5	60.0	30.1/119	3.3
Sportster 1200S	$7695	cruiser	a/c 4v 1200 V-twin	5/belt	501	28.0	60.2	29.6/117	3.3
Sportster 1200	$7695	cruiser	a/c 4v 1200 V-twin	5/belt	491	28.9	60.0	29.6/117	3.3
Sportster 883C	$6595	cruiser	a/c 4v 883 V-twin	5/belt	489	27.5	60.0	29.6/117	3.3
Sportster 883	$5345	cruiser	a/c 4v 883 V-twin	5/belt	486	27.1	59.0	30.1/119	3.3
HONDA 1919 TORRANCE BOULEVARD TORRANCE, CA 90501; 310/783–2000 WWW.HONDAMOTORCYCLE.COM									
Gold Wing SE	$17,599	touring	l/c 12v 1520 opposed-six	5/shaft	816	29.1	66.5	30.1/111	6.3
Gold Wing Asp.	$15,199	touring	l/c 12v 1520 opposed-six	5/shaft	803	29.1	66.5	30.1/111	6.3
Valkyrie Interstate	$15,499	touring	l/c 12v 1520 opposed-six	5/shaft	771	28.7	66.5	32.0/152	6.9
Valkyrie Tourer	$14,199	touring	l/c 12v 1520 opposed-six	5/shaft	714	28.9	66.5	32.0/152	5.3
Valkyrie	$12,799	cruiser	l/c 12v 1520 opposed-six	5/shaft	682	28.9	66.5	32.2/152	5.3
A.C.E. Tourer	$9999	touring	l/c 6v 1099 V-twin	5/shaft	626	28.7	65.2	NA/NA	4.2
Shadow Aero	$9699	cruiser	l/c 6v 1099 V-twin	5/shaft	615	28.5	66.1	32.4/161	4.2
Shadow Sabre	$8199	cruiser	l/c 6v 1099 V-twin	5/shaft	573	27.2	64.6	32.4/161	4.2
Shadow Spirit	$7999	cruiser	l/c 6v 1099 V-twin	5/shaft	544	28.7	65.0	32.4/161	4.2
VF750C Magna	$7499	cruiser	l/c 16v 748 V-four	5/chain	505	28.0	65.0	32.0/137	3.6
Shadow A.C.E. 750	$5699	cruiser	l/c 6v 745 V-twin	5/chain	505	27.6	63.6	33.0/157	3.7
Shadow VLX	$4999	cruiser	l/c 6v 583 V-twin	5/chain	445	25.6	63.2	35.0/164	2.9
Rebel	$2999	cruiser	a/c 4v 234 vertical-twin	5/chain	306	26.6	57.1	30.0/113	2.6
ST1100/ABS	$11,899	sport-touring	l/c 16v 1084 V-four	5/shaft	639/659	31.5	61.2	27.3/101	7.4

CONVENTIONS

note 1: cooling medium (a/c=air/cooled, l/c=liquid-cooled, a-o/c=air- and oil-cooled); total number of valves (4-v), displacement in cc; number of cylinders and configuration (single, inline-three, opposed-twin, V-twin)

BACK ISSUES

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verdict
High-buck Superbike homologation special
A poor-man's Mille SP, but still plenty trick
A Ducati 996 without the red mist
Italy's answer to the Honda VTR1000F
Not street-legal, but plenty of fun trackside
Pint-sized version of the RS250, equally rare
Italian dual-sport most at home in the city
Street-going version of Gobert's TL-powered racer
GSX-R1100 power makes this the horniest Bimota
Genesis engine for big-bang performance
Italian exotica on higher level, and still pretty good
A Monster on hallucinogens, can you relate?
Tourer with everything you can possibly imagine
Flying brick as an *autobahn* burner; not nimble
More functional than the straight C, still handsome
More industrial art than typically functional BMW
Great long-haul tourer we'd take anywhere
Weird, wacky, wonderful..is this the best BMW ever?
"S" for sport—really sport-toury
Excellent, basic Boxer appeals to minimalists
Baby GS a huge improvement over old F650
T includes larger fairing and bags, it's no BMW
Hottest Buell is lots of booming, antisocial fun
Cyclone is our favorite Buell, gets better every year
Average functionally, but did Buell aim too low?
The best adventure-tourer Ducati never built
Four consecutive WSC crowns, what else can we say?
A 916 for the sport-touring set, fast but still comfy
A rev-happy 996 for middleweight lovers
Cheaper tourer with standard bags, a bit poochy
Emotional and a bit impractical, but who cares?
The original hooligan now with fuel injection
Haughty street attitude in a black turtleneck
Cheaper version of the 900, still a Ducati
Least expensive entreé in the Duck Café
Buy one now, they may soon be collectable
There's probably a kitchen sink in there somewhere
One notch down from the Ultra, a fine big rig
Classic tourer version with spokes and whitewalls
Harley's sport-tourer with a killer stereo
Fun and functional, best parts of cruiser and tourer
Blank canvas for hot-rod tourer, relatively cheap
Huge pose factor now with competent engine
H-D's bread and butter classic, just keeps selling
Most custom of all H-Ds works well too
Stripper springer, new motor…needs better brakes
Most popular Dyna is the classic chopper
Big around the middle but still lovable
Part-time tourer for weekend treks
If black is your thing, this is your chopper
Slammed suspension helps shorties, hurts ride
Sportiest Big Twin is our favorite hog
Bare bones Softail strips away the nonessential
Harley's entry-level Big Twin, still a pretty good piece
Custom big-inch Sporty leads the XL line
Sportiest Sportster will not harass many Buells
Basic 1200 still elemental; still a paint shaker
Less dear and much less satisfying than a 1200
Cheap, basic…and you're reminded every mile
Still the most comfortable touring bike ever built
Fewer amenities, same great long-haul package
Hot-rod tourer will go the distance in style
Windshield and bags on a Valky—great weekender
Hard to argue with 100 foot-pounds of torque, eh?
Shadow 1100 with bags and windshield, not a GL
Honda's ultimate V-twin cruiser, for now
Tough-guy custom growls but doesn't bite
Original VT1100 resurrected for the budget-minded
V-four power gives the Magna real performance
Midsize A.C.E. with fat tires and lots of chrome
Mini Shadow's lack of punch is fine for beginners
Stalwart starter mule inspires few fantasies
Vanilla personality, stunningly functional

Steer Clear

Head bearings loose? Here's the fix

HOW-TO

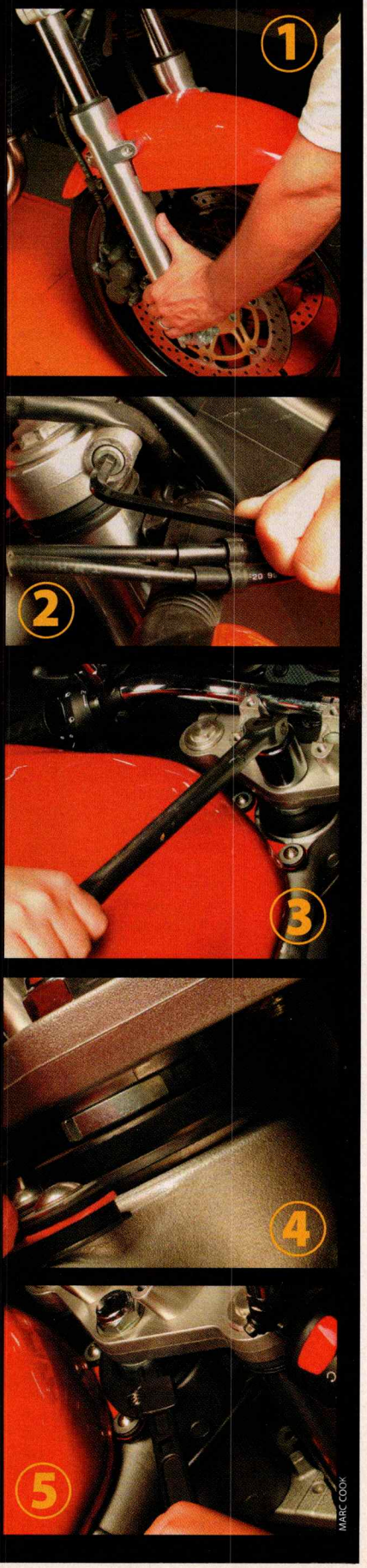
LATELY YOU'VE BEGUN TO NOTICE THIS annoying little clunk from the front end as you ease into the brakes. Likely as not, you've got loose steering-head bearings. Snugging them up is straightforward, so give it a try. Support the bike with a track stand plus a jack under the engine will do, just enough to get the front tire clear off the ground.

The fork is supported in the frame by two sets of bearings, one directly above the lower triple clamp and one immediately below the upper triple clamp. Tension on these bearings is maintained by cups held by threaded collars on the steering stem.

Grasp the fork near the axle (1) and try to move the wheel fore and aft. Any movement in this plane is too much. If you're not sure, try placing one finger between the lower yoke and the frame; you may be able to discern movement easier with this method. While the front wheel is raised, gently turn the fork from lock to lock. It should move smoothly and without noticeable friction. If you've observed strange handling lately, it could be from overtight bearings.

You must loosen all of the upper triple clamp hardware to release the tension on the steering stem (2). You may need to remove the handlebars to gain access to the upper stem nut. It's possible to get a big Crescent wrench in there, but the tank's finish and your knuckles would prefer a proper socket and ratchet or breaker bar (3). The Suzuki shown here has a 30mm upper stem nut. Loosen this nut slightly.

The main tension is held by one or more collars with square-edged cutouts intended for special tools but still receptive of the odd drift or screwdriver blade (4). Using this specialized Kowa tool, for example, increase the tension on the bearings by about an eighth turn at a time (5). Go back and check the play at the fork. Be looking for the sweet spot between no clunk and noticeable friction in the steering head. If in doubt, leave it a bit loose because torqueing the stem nut above the upper triple clamp will slightly increase bearing tension. Button it all up by tightening the fork leg bolts at the upper clamp and checking one more time for play and friction.



the list

model	price	class	engine (note 1)	speeds/ final drive	dry weight (lb.)	seat height (in.)	wheel-base (in.)	rake (deg)/ trail(mm)	fuel cap. (gal.)
CBR1100XX	$10,599	sport	l/c 16v 1137 inline-four	6/chain	492	31.9	58.7	25.0/99	6.3
CBR929RR	$9999	sport	l/c 16v 929 inline-four	6/chain	375	32.1	54.9	23.8/97	4.8
RC51	$9999	sport	l/c 8v 999 V-twin	6/chain	432	32.0	55.5	24.5/101	4.8
VFR800F Interceptor	$9499	sport	l/c 16v 781 V-four	6/chain	463	31.7	56.7	25.3/95	5.5
VTR 1000F Super Hawk	$8999	sport	l/c 8v 996 V-twin	6/chain	423	31.9	56.3	24.0/97	4.8
CBR600F4	$7899	sport	l/c 16v 599 inline-four	6/chain	373	31.9	54.7	24.0/96	4.5
CB750 Nighthawk	$5799	standard	a/c 16v 747 inline-four	5/chain	463	30.9	59.3	29.0/180	4.8
CB250 Nighthawk	$3399	standard	a/c 4v 234 vertical-twin	5/chain	287	29.3	56.3	28.0/109	4.3
HUSQVARNA 1901 DAVISVILLE ROAD WILLOW GROVE, PA 19090; 215/830–3300 WWW.HUSQVARNAUSA.COM									
SM610S	$6499	super-motard	l/c 4v 576 single	6/chain	331	33.9	59.3	27.0/88	2.4
TE610E	$6399	dual-sport	l/c 4v 576 single	6/chain	330	35.4	58.5	27.5/116	2.4
KAWASAKI 9950 JERONIMO ROAD IRVINE, CA 92618; 949/770–0400 WWW.KAWASAKI.COM									
Nomad FI	$12,799	touring	l/c 8v 1470 V-twin	5/shaft	739	28.3	65.6	32.0/188	4.2
Nomad	$11,999	touring	l/c 8v 1470 V-twin	5/shaft	733	28.3	65.6	32.0/188	4.2
Voyager XII	$11,999	touring	l/c 16v 1196 inline-four	6/shaft	728	29.7	63.8	30.0/122	6.1
1500 Drifter	$11,499	cruiser	l/c 8v 1470 V-twin	5/shaft	668	29.1	65.2	32.0/163	4.2
Vulcan 1500 FI	$10,799	cruiser	l/c 8v 1470 V-twin	5/shaft	659	29.1	65.4	32.0/163	5.0
Vulcan 1500 Classic	$9999	cruiser	l/c 8v 1470 V-twin	5/shaft	644	27.6	65.4	32.0/122	4.2
800 Drifter	$7299	cruiser	l/c 8v 805 V-twin	5/chain	547	29.9	63.6	31.5/157	4.0
Vulcan 800 Classic	$6799	cruiser	l/c 8v 805 V-twin	5/chain	516	27.8	63.0	32.0/122	4.0
Vulcan 800	$6099	cruiser	l/c 8v 805 V-twin	5/chain	496	28.0	64.0	34.0/150	4.0
Vulcan 750	$5999	cruiser	l/c 8v 749 V-twin	5/shaft	483	28.9	62.2	32.0/127	3.6
Vulcan 500 LTD	$4599	cruiser	l/c 8v 498 vertical-twin	5/chain	496	28.1	62.8	33.0/150	4.0
Ninja ZX-12R	$11,999	sport	l/c 16v 1198 inline-four	6/chain	463	32.3	56.5	23.5/94	5.3
Ninja ZX-9R	$10.199	sport	l/c 16v 899 inline-four	6/chain	403	32.3	55.7	24.0/97	5.0
Ninja ZX-11	$10.199	sport	l/c 16v 1052 inline-four	6/chain	514	30.7	58.9	26.5/107	6.3
Ninja ZX-7R	$8999	sport	l/c 16v 748 inline-four	6/chain	448	31.1	56.5	25.0/99	4.8
Ninja ZX-6R	$8099	sport	l/c 16v 599 inline-four	6/chain	377	32.1	55.1	23.5/91	4.8
Concours	$7999	sport-touring	l/c 16v 997 inline-four	6/shaft	595	31.1	61.2	28.5/122	7.5
ZRX1100	$7299	standard	l/c 16v 1052 inline-four	5/chain	490	31.1	55.1	25.0/104	5.3
Ninja ZX-6	$6999	sport	l/c 16v 599 inline-four	6/chain	430	30.7	56.3	24.5/97	4.8
W650	$6499	standard	a/c 8v 676 vertical-twin	5/chain	430	31.5	57.1	26.5/104	4.0
ZR-7	$5699	standard	a/c 8v 738 inline-four	5/chain	445	31.5	57.3	25.5/144	5.8
Ninja 500R	$4999	sport	l/c 8v 498 vertical twin	6/chain	388	30.5	56.5	27.0/91	4.8
Ninja 250R	$2999	sport	l/c 8v 248 vertical twin	6/chain	304	29.3	55.1	27.0/84	4.8
KLR650	$4899	dual-sport	l/c 4v 651 single	5/chain	337	35.0	58.9	28.0/112	6.1
Super Sherpa	$4899	dual-sport	a/c 4v 249 single	6/chain	249	32.7	54.1	28.0/107	2.4
KLR250	$3949	dual-sport	l/c 4v 249 single	6/chain	258	33.7	55.7	28.5/117	2.9
KE100	$1899	dual-sport	a/c 2st 99 single	5/chain	187	31.7	50.6	30.5/119	2.4
KTM 930 FESLER STREET EL CAJON, CA 92020; 440/985–3553 WWW.KTMUSA.COM									
LC4 Adventurer R	$8098	dual-sport	l/c 4v 625 single	5/chain	340	35.4	59.5	28.0/NA	7.4
Duke II	$7998	sport	l/c 4v 625 single	5/chain	320	33.8	57.5	25.8/NA	3.0
LC4 Super Moto	$7198	super motard	l/c 4v 625 single	5/chain	302	36.8	59.5	28.0/NA	3.0
640 LC4/400 LC4	$6798	dual-sport	l/c 4v 625/398 single	5/chain	340	37.6	59.5	27.5/NA	3.0
LAVERDA 8989 MONROE HOUSTON, TX 77061; 713/943–2288 WWW.MOTOLAVERDA.COM									
750 Formula	$10,595	sport	l/c 8v 747 vertical-twin	6/chain	412	NA	54.2	26.3/103	5.0
750 Supersport	$9495	sport	l/c 8v 747 vertical-twin	6/chain	412	NA	54.2	26.3/103	5.0
Strike Cafe Racer	$8995	sport	l/c 8v 747 vertical-twin	6/chain	412	NA	54.2	26.3/103	5.0
Strike	$8495	sport	l/c 8v 747 vertical-twin	6/chain	418	NA	54.2	26.3/103	5.0
MOTO GUZZI 455 WEST DEPOT STREET ANGIER, NC 27501; 919/639–3180 WWW.MOTOGUZZI-US.COM									
California Special	$11,700	cruiser	a/c 4v 1064 V-twin	5/shaft	545	28.8	NA	NA/NA	5.0
California Jackal	$8495	cruiser	a/c 4v 1064 V-twin	5/shaft	542	29.0	61.5	28.0/154	5.0
V11 Sport	$11,900	sport	a/c 4v 1064 V-twin	6/shaft	472	31.0	NA	NA/NA	5.5
Quota	$9995	dual-sport	a/c 4v 1064 V-twin	5/shaft	541	32.8	61.0	NA/NA	5.2
MuZ 4 SIGNAL AVENUE, SUITE C ORMOND BEACH, FL 32174; 904/676–1056 WWW.MOTORRADNA.COM									
Skorpion Replica	$7995	sport	l/c 5v 660 single	5/chain	374	31.0	56.0	NA/NA	4.7
Skorpion Traveller	$6495	sport-touring	l/c 5v 660 single	5/chain	415	31.0	56.0	NA/NA	4.7
Skorpion Sport Cup	$5795	sport	l/c 5v 660 single	5/chain	382	31.0	56.0	NA/NA	4.7
Skorpion Tour	$4995	standard	l/c 5v 660 single	5/chain	374	31.0	56.0	NA/NA	5.0
Black Panther	$7995	sport	l/c 5v 660 single	5/chain	345	34.5	59.5	NA/NA	3.0
MV AGUSTA 1901 DAVISVILLE ROAD WILLOW GROVE, PA 19090; 215/830–3300 WWW.MVAGUSTAUSA.COM									
F4S 750 Strada	$18,895	sport	l/c 16v 750 inline-four	6/chain	397	31.1	55.6	24.5/104	5.8
SUZUKI 3251 EAST IMPERIAL HIGHWAY BREA, CA 92821; 714/996–7040 WWW.SUZUKI.COM									
1500 Intruder LC	$9949	cruiser	a-o/c 8v 1462 V-twin	5/shaft	644	27.6	66.9	32.0/138	4.1
1400 Intruder	$8299	cruiser	a-o/c 8v 1360 V-twin	5/shaft	535	27.6	63.5	32.0/166	3.4
800 Intruder	$6299	cruiser	l/c 8v 805 V-twin	5/shaft	443	28.9	61.4	32.0/138	3.2
Marauder	$5949	cruiser	l/c 8v 805 V-twin	5/chain	456	27.6	64.8	35.0/146	3.4
Savage	$4249	cruiser	a/c 4v 652 single	5/belt	352	27.6	58.3	35.0/147	2.8
GZ250	$2949	cruiser	a/c 2v 249 single	5/chain	308	27.8	57.1	32.0/140	3.7
GSX1300R Hayabusa	$10,799	sport	l/c 16v 1299 inline-four	6/chain	473	31.7	58.5	24.0/97	5.8
TL1000R	$9549	sport	l/c 8v 996 V-twin	6/chain	434	32.5	54.9	23.0/90	4.5
GSX-R750	$9399	sport	l/c 16v 749 inline-four	6/chain	366	32.6	55.5	24.0/94	4.8
TL1000S	$9049	sport	l/c 8v 996 V-twin	6/chain	421	32.9	55.7	23.0/95	4.5
GSX-R600	$7849	sport	l/c 16v 599 inline-four	6/chain	383	32.7	54.5	24.0/96	4.8
1200S Bandit	$7249	sport-touring	a-o/c 16v 1157 inline-four	5/chain	471	32.9	56.5	25.0/107	5.0
GSX750F Katana	$7249	sport-touring	a-o/c 16v 749 inline-four	6/chain	469	31.1	57.7	25.0/100	5.3
GSX600F Katana	$6249	sport-touring	a-o/c 16v 599 inline-four	6/chain	458	30.9	57.9	25.0/100	5.3
600S Bandit	$5799	sport-touring	a-o/c 16v 599 inline-four	6/chain	449	31.1	56.4	25.0/100	5.3
SV650	$5749	standard	l/c 8v 645 V-twin	6/chain	363	31.7	56.3	25.0/100	4.2
GS500E	$4299	standard	a/c 4v 487 vertical-twin	6/chain	372	31.1	58.5	25.0/95	4.0
DR650SE	$5399	dual-sport	a-o/c 4v 644 single	5/chain	324	33.0	58.7	28.0/111	3.4

verdict
Speed king until last year, superbly polished
Totally new, super light, best bid to beat the R1
Chance to unclench Ducati Superbike stranglehold
Fab all-arounder, we honestly love this thing
A Ducati Supersport 900 done right
Not as nutty as an R6, more accessible to mortals
Competent, bland, not exactly cheap
MSF drop doggie on a cat-food budget
Husky's answer to KTM's awesome Duke II
A true enduro-racer with lights
Injection really improves Kawasaki's touring cruiser
Motorcycle Cruiser's pick as best touring cruiser
Mid-'80s tech and price equal bargain long-hauler
Functional runner, love-it or hate-it styling
Kawasaki's best-selling cruiser
The most functional Japanese V-twin available
You can think, but don't say, Indian
Custom V-twin looks in an affordable package
Blank canvas middleweight cruiser for little cash
Seriously inexpensive cruiser, and looks the part
Entry-level cruiser with a 500 Ninja heart
An overhyped, but still great, open-class GT
The polished hooligan, an R1 with manners
With the 12R here, it's starting to show its age
Long-in-the-tooth Superbike; replacement coming
Smooth and comfy, right there with the F4 and R6
Ancient sporty tourer, still hauls the goods
Fast and sexy, our favorite way to get naked
Porky but competent middleweight, can tour
An amazingly good Triumph rep, even feels old
Veteran engine and modern chassis, a fine naked bike
Tot-sized twin with major-league fun factor
Quarter-liter terror that revs to the moon
Long-running model refined into super dual-sport
New entry-level model excellent for dirty newbies
Smaller KLR may be your next ranch hand
Only remaining street-legal two-stroke...really
Huge P/D replibike, park next to your Excursion
Ultimate urban-assault vehicle—hard to find
Supermotard-style beast is an unrepentant bad boy
Austria's dirt-worthy streetbike, great off road
High-end parallel twin needs further development
Cheaper version with all the same foibles
Laverda's version of the Triumph Speed Triple
Naked and less expensive, but is that enough?
Guzzi cruiser stands ready for factory custom stuff
Simple, sporty cruiser that's also reasonably priced
A stripped Guzzi in the V7 tradition
Locked-in-the-1980s adventure tourer, needs help
Pricey Euro single looking for the right relationship
Sport Cup with hard luggage, bigger fairing
Same Yamaha-built engine, less flash and less cash
Looks (and runs) like an SV650 with a lung removed
Who names these things, anyway?
Sell your wife for this thing? Of course you would
Big cruiser is actually a pretty good piece
U.S.-designed cruiser still with us, punchy engine
Smaller, old-style Intruder continues to sell well
Bargain bruiser; a Magna without as much grunt
A decent little cruising single, if a bit basic
Suzuki's 250 Rebel with hot-rod styling
Still the fastest open-class GT, and our favorite
A neat big-bore twin hampered by excess weight
All new for 2000, a 750 that worries literbikes
Massive motor, sacrifices comfort for attitude
A track-ready scratcher in need of a revamp
Super-functional naked bike looks a bit dated
Popular, reasonably cheap, old GSX-R750 power
Popular, even cheaper, early GSX-R600 power
A budget bike that doesn't feel cheap
The ultimate bang-for-the-buck, an *MC* fave
Decent entry bike, not as good as the Ninja 500
Suzuki's street-ized big-bore dual-sport

Answers

SCATTERGUN APPROACH

I just got the current issue of *Motorcyclist*, and read several articles wherein you complained about buzzy handlebars. Shotguns and reloading equipment mustn't be available where you are, otherwise you'd have filled those handlebars with lead shot of about one-eighth-inch diameter, like I did on my Ducati Monster and my BMW R100RT. (The Monster's handlebar is thick-walled aluminum, so I may change it to the more common thin-walled steel to fit more shot in it.) I use a V-shaped piece of sheet aluminum as the guide for the shot which I pour in the throttle side of the handlebar from an old yogurt cup, when I have the bike on its kickstand. Make sure the shot is tight, so it doesn't buzz. Really extravagant types would cast in Cerro Metal's ultra-low-temperature melting dense alloys (available at good model railroad shops, etc.) but that's too much for me.

Jon Barletta
Punxsutawney, PA

We'll take a shot at it. Thanks for the bulletin.

TACH ME DOWN

I have a '99 Suzuki Intruder 800 and a question, actually several, regarding rpm. I installed a tachometer on the bike. At 55 mph, the tach reads 6000 rpm. Seems like a lot. Is the factory gearing set to limit my speed? Surely it can go faster than that.... The whole gearing thing is a mystery to me. Help?

Ira Zichlin
Somewhere out there

Sounds like you got your wires crossed or something, as your tach seems to read just about twice what the actual rpm should be. You can use this Cro-Magnon method to figure it out. We happen to have specs handy for the 1400 Intruder, but your bike will be semi-close. Your owner's manual should contain all these numbers.

The 1400 Intruder, being shaft-driven, has two sets of bevel gears—one at each end of the shaft. The one in front is 32 teeth/12 teeth (2.67 ratio), the one out back is 29/34 (0.85 ratio). Multiplying those gives final-drive gearing of 2.27:1. (For a chain-driven bike, final drive gearing is simply the number of rear sprocket teeth divided by the number of front teeth.)

Then you need primary-drive ratio, which is listed as 1.65 for our old '88 Intruder, and top (fourth) gear ratio—1.04 according to our specs.

Final-drive ratio multiplied by primary-ratio by top gear ratio equals an overall top-gear ratio of 3.895, which means that for each revolution of your rear wheel, the engine spins 3.895 times in top gear.

How much ground does your rear tire cover with each rotation? Most are about 76 inches in circumference, but you can measure yours with a tape measure. One mile is 5280 feet, or 63,360 inches. Your rear tire rotates, then, 834 times per mile. (We won't confuse the issue with tire slip.) If the old Intruder is bombing along at 60 mph—one mile per minute—the engine is turning over 834 multiplied by 3.895, er ah, 3248 revolutions per minute. Simply put, 63,360 divided by rear-wheel circumference (inches) multiplied by overall top-gear ratio equals rpm at 60 mph. Your 800's tach should read about 3500 in top gear at 60 mph.

Send your questions to *Motorcyclist*, Attn: Answers, 6420 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90048-5515; fax them to (323) 782-2372; or e-mail us at mcmail@emapusa.com. Time doesn't permit personal replies and the editors reserve the right to edit all letters, which must be exclusive to *Motorcyclist*.

the list

model	price	class	engine (note 1)	speeds/ final drive	dry weight (lb.)	seat height (in.)	wheel-base (in.)	rake (deg)/ trail(mm)	fuel cap. (gal.)
DR-Z400S	$5349	dual-sport	l/c 4v 398 single	5/chain	291	36.8	58.1	27.0/109	2.6
DR200SE	$3849	dual-sport	a/c 4v 199 single	5/chain	249	31.9	55.3	29.0/112	3.4
TRIUMPH 403 DIVIDEND DRIVE PEACHTREE CITY, GA 30269; 770/631–9500 WWW.TRIUMPH.CO.UK									
Adventurer	$8999	cruiser	l/c 12v 885 inline-three	5/chain	464	28.5	63.8	30.0/130	4.0
Thunderbird	$8999	cruiser	l/c 12v 885 inline-three	6/chain	485	30.5	62.2	27.0/106	4.0
Thunderbird Sport	$8699	cruiser	l/c 12v 885 inline-three	6/chain	494	31.1	62.2	27.0/106	4.0
Legend TT	$7699	cruiser	l/c 12v 885 inline-three	5/chain	473	28.5	62.2	27.0/106	4.0
Trophy 1200	$11,999	sport-touring	l/c 16v 1180 inline-four	6/chain	518	31.1	58.7	27.0/105	6.6
Daytona	$10,999	sport	l/c 12v 955 inline-three	6/chain	436	31.5	56.3	24.0/86	4.8
Trophy 900	$10,999	sport-touring	l/c 12v 885 inline-three	6/chain	464	31.1	58.7	27.0/105	6.6
Sprint RS	$9499	sport	l/c 12v 955 inline-three	6/chain	438	31.7	57.9	24.5/89	5.6
Sprint ST	$10,699	sport-touring	l/c 12v 955 inline-three	6/chain	456	31.5	57.9	25.0/92	5.6
Speed Triple	$10,299	sport	l/c 12v 955 inline-three	6/chain	432	31.5	56.7	24.0/86	4.8
TT600	$8299	sport	l/c 16v 599 inline-four	6/chain	374	31.9	54.9	24.6/89	4.8
Tiger	$10,499	dual-sport	l/c 12v 885 inline-three	6/chain	474	33.1	61.0	28.0/92	5.6
VICTORY 2100 HIGHWAY 55 MEDINA, MN 55340; 612/542–0500 WWW.POLARISINDUSTRIES.COM									
V92SC	$13,999	cruiser	a-o/c 8v 1507 V-twin	5/belt	657	28.5	63.6	30.0/120	5.0
V92C	$13,499	cruiser	a-o/c 8v 1507 V-twin	5/belt	657	28.5	63.6	30.0/120	5.0
YAMAHA 6555 KATELLA AVENUE CYPRESS, CA 90630; 714/761–7300 WWW.YAMAHA-MOTOR.COM									
Royal Star Venture	$15,999	touring	l/c 16v 1294 V-four	5/shaft	807	29.5	67.1	30.0/126	6.0
RS Tour Deluxe/classic	$15,199	touring	l/c 16v 1294 V-four	5/shaft	771	28.5	66.7	30.0/126	4.8
Royal Star	$13,949	cruiser	l/c 16v 1294 V-four	5/shaft	673	28.1	66.7	30.0/126	4.8
Road Star Silverado	$11,999	cruiser	a/c 8v 1602 V-twin	5/belt	710	27.9	66.3	32.0/142	5.3
Road Star	$10,599	cruiser	a/c 8v 1602 V-twin	5/belt	677	27.9	66.3	32.0/142	5.3
V-Max	$10,499	cruiser	l/c 16v 1198 V-four	5/shaft	581	27.2	64.6	29.0/119	4.0
V-Star 1100 Classic	$7999	cruiser	a/c 4v 1063 V-twin	5/shaft	599	27.9	64.8	33.0/136	4.5
V-Star 1100	$7799	cruiser	a/c 4v 1063 V-twin	5/shaft	571	27.0	64.5	33.0/136	4.5
V-Star Classic	$5899	cruiser	a/c 4v 649 V-twin	5/shaft	495	28.0	64.0	35.0/NA	4.2
V-Star	$5599	cruiser	a/c 4v 649 V-twin	5/shaft	460	25.6	64.0	35.0/NA	4.2
Virago 535	$5299	cruiser	a/c 4v 535 V-twin	5/shaft	403	28.3	59.8	31.5/125	3.6
Virago 250	$3299	cruiser	a/c 4v 249 V-twin	5/chain	302	27.0	58.7	32.0/120	2.5
YZF-R1	$10,199	sport	l/c 20v 998 inline-four	6/chain	385	32.0	54.9	24.0/92	4.7
YZF-R6	$7999	sport	l/c 16v 599 inline-four	6/chain	370	32.8	54.4	24.0/81	4.5
YZF600R	$6999	sport	l/c 16v 599 inline-four	6/chain	416	31.7	55.7	25.0/97	5.0
XT350	$4449	dual-sport	a/c 4v 346 single	6/chain	262	33.7	55.9	27.2/107	3.2
XT225	$3849	dual-sport	a/c 4v 223 single	6/chain	238	31.9	53.1	26.5/102	2.3
TW200	$3399	dual-sport	a/c 2v 346 single	5/chain	262	31.1	52.2	26.5/94	1.9

SPORT RIDER
The Sport Rider Racing Photo Annual returns! A spectacular full-color photographic chronicle of the year in racing, with shots from the world's best photographers.
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verdict
An impressive d/p bike—a do-it-all machine
Basic and fun wheels for entry level folks
A custom T-bird with V-twin-squashing power
Retro-cruiser looks, naked-bike performance
An even sportier version of the T-Bird, our fave
Entry-level Britbike, torquey and talented triple
Touring model with a replacement expected soon
Not quite R1 performance but plenty of attitude
Trophy chassis package, three-cylinder propulsion
A sportier Sprint ST, with a lot less polish
VFR-clone sport-tourer stakes its own claim
Competent streetfighter, polarizing looks
Can big performance rescue lackluster looks?
Not as good as a GS Beemer, but much cheaper
Plenty of sporty function, tranny still needs help
Visceral, kit-bike feel, unique look, rough edges
Retro looks, long-haul function, needs new 'shield
A decent touring cruiser in need of some punch
Standard Star also wants a horsepower injection
Touring version of the highly competent Road Star
Functional and handsome, what else do you need?
Creaky pavement-rippling cruiser, still a hoot
Open-class retro cruiser, works great, priced right
Less retro, same great low price
Big retro cruiser look, small price, works great
Middle-of-the-road custom, function over lust
A short, budget cruiser with a big-bike feel
A cheap V-twin that'll get you in the game
Even more superb, facing 929 threat head on
Most radical 600 supersport of all, a real gem
Less punch than an R6, but lots more streetable
Model-line survivor for a reason; it works
Lightweight and fun entry-level dual-sport
A fat-tired fun-bike for the family

No Slack for the Pack

STREET SAVVY

THOSE BUNGEE-ON TAIL packs sold by various purveyors of fine motorcycle luggage are great for solo sportbikers. They let you ride your bike the unencumbered way God intended and still have clean underwear the following day. Some packs are nicer than others, of course, but the main thing they all share is an uncanny ability to work their way loose halfway down some bumpy, swervy back road. It's a rough ride there on the pillion, and your tail pack has no legs to help it absorb impacts. Depending on how many pairs of holey briefs are wadded up therein, the loss of pack in itself might not be such a terrible thing; the problem lies in the fact that the wayward pack then loves nothing better than to wedge itself into the swingarm and lock the rear tire solid. It's a sick feeling, truly, and people it happens to don't seem to have any idea what's going on until it's too late to react. Scriiiish, screech, down you go. It's happened to two of us in the last few years, as well as to several readers we've heard from. Having clean undies and non-furry teeth on the road is a good thing, but if it's at the expense of pricey bodywork and contusions, well, hygiene has its limits.

Learn from us. Make sure all four corners of your tail pack have secure mounting points. And always loop an extra bungee (or two) across the top of the pack when you're traveling hard and fast. Cheap insurance.

Ready, set—*then* turn!

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT COMMON CAUSES OF motorcycle accidents, we typically refer to the left-turning car scenario, which happens to be the leading cause of death for motorcyclists. This one falls into what's known as the "multivehicle accident" category.

KEVIN WING

TECHNIQUE

On the other side of the coin are "single-vehicle accidents," those that involve only the bike and rider. And when you look at these crashes, the scenario that stands tank and handlebars above all the rest is the bike/rider combination that gets into a corner too hot, runs out of asphalt and crashes spectacularly off one side of the road. (Improper cornering and braking techniques are at fault here 95 percent of the time, though it's interesting to note that rarely is the bike actually traveling too quickly to make the corner—the rider simply perceives it to be so.)

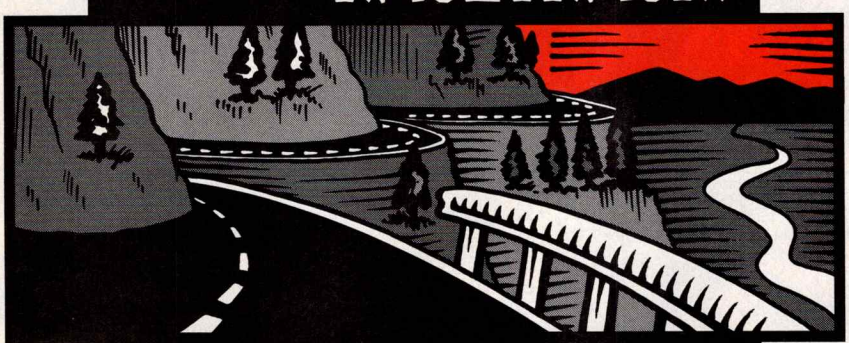
All of these broken motorcycles and skeletal members could be avoided with the application of one simple rule—and one we've preached for years: Always set your speed *before* you begin to lean the motorcycle into a corner. It all sounds so simple: See the upcoming corner, accurately judge the distances and speeds involved, and apply the brakes in plenty of time to reduce the bike's speed to a manageable rate before countersteering into the corner. Funny how many folks get it wrong—or don't try to get it right.

All it takes, really, besides a decent amount of braking ability, is mental effort—a sense of awareness that if you don't set your speed early on, you could end up getting slammed off the rock wall, cartwheeled off a cliff, or tossed willy nilly into a barbed-wire-ringed cornfield. Not fun. Keep that image fresh in your mind and it'll be a lot easier to keep the speeds within reason and the fingers of your throttle hand poised expectantly on the brake lever.

A couple of tips: It helps to be able to see clearly, so if you need glasses or contacts, *wear them*. Sit tall in the saddle when approaching a corner, and try to not let any scenic distractions force your eyes from the entry of it. Use good braking techniques, which means use both brakes in tandem and operate them smoothly. Give yourself plenty of margin for error, such as a miscalculation on the corner's sharpness or debris at the apex.

If you're firm about always setting a comfortable speed before you commit to a corner, the chances of you getting in too hot drop to nearly zero. And those are good odds.

You CAN'T WIN IF You treat this like a RACETRACK.



Only losers race on public roads. Not only are they putting themselves in jeopardy, but also the innocent folks on the road with them who have to deal with such irresponsible behavior. The only place you can win is on the racetrack. When the street's your racetrack, everyone loses.

HONDA

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hard numbers

motorcycle	measured hp (@ rpm)	measured torque (foot-pounds @ rpm)	corrected best 1/4 mi.* (sec. @ mph)	top-gear roll-ons 60–80 mph (sec.)	wet weight (lb.)	fuel consumption (avg. mpg)	last** tested
Aprilia RSV Mille ('00)	113.6 @ 9500	71.6 @ 7000	10.58 @ 131.5	3.80	490	39	4/00
Aprilia SL1000 ('00)	110.4 @ 9500	69.3 @ 7100	10.99 @ 125.0	4.56	485	39	8/00
BMW F650GS ('00)	43.5 @ 6250	40.3 @ 4500	13.76 @ 91.6	6.03	442	45	7/00
BMW K1200LT ('99)	90.0 @ 6200		13.31 @ 101.0	8.00	849	41	8/99
BMW K1200RS ('98)	111.1 @ 8250	79.1 @ 6750	11.77 @ 118.2		643	36	8/97
BMW R1100S ('00)	92.2 @ 7250	70.9 @ 5750	12.67 @ 111.0	5.44	545	31	6/00
BMW R1150GS ('00)	79.7 @ 6500	72.2 @ 5500	12.84 @ 103.1	6.59	586	42	12/99
BMW R1200C ('98)	56.4 @ 5000	63.6 @ 3000	14.24 @ 91.2		560	44	12/97
Buell S3 Thunderbolt ('99)	90.1 @ 6500	78.1 @ 6000	11.90 @ 113.2		514	47	10/98
Buell S3T Thunderbolt ('97)	76.9 @ 5750	72.8 @ 5000	12.45 @ 107.3	7.69	520	44	*2/98*
Ducati 748 ('97)	89.7 @ 10,500	51.7 @ 8500	11.59 @ 119.7		472	43	5/97
Ducati 900SS FE ('99)	70.7 @ 6750	58.5 @ 5000	11.88 @ 110.1	4.53	455	49	8/98
Ducati 996 ('99)	109.8 @ 8750	69.6 @ 6750	10.61 @ 130.2	5.35	478	40	3/99
Ducati Supersport 900 ('99)	77.4 @ 8000	57.3 @ 5750	11.65 @ 114.9	5.26	444	44	11/98
Ducati Supersport 900 i.e.('00)	77.5 @ 7750	59.3 @ 5750	11.99 @ 109.5	5.61	444	43	6/00
Ducati ST2 ('98)	75.4 @ 8500	56.6 @ 6500	12.39 @ 106.2	5.42	532	42	*2/98*
Ducati ST4 ('99)	105.5 @ 9250	63.3 @ 7250	11.03 @ 123.8	4.88	525	44	2/99
H-D FLHCRI Road King Classic ('99)	62.4 @ 5250	77.2 @ 3000	13.99 @ 94.5	5.32	744	43	12/98
H-D FLTR/FLTRI Road Glide ('98)			14.39 @ 90.7	9.02	762	46	6/98
H-D FXDX Dyna Super Glide Sport ('99)	62.5 @ 5500	76.3 @ 3250	13.54 @ 96.5	5.82	651	39	11/98
H-D S.E. Road Glide ('00)	70.8 @ 5250	86.4 @ 2750	13.93 @ 93.1	6.71	828	33	5/00
H-D Sportster XL1200S Sport ('98)	57.0 @ 5250	66.3 @ 3250	13.65 @ 96.1	4.99	524	41	1/98
Honda CBR600F3 ('97)	93.5 @ 11,750	44.5 @ 10,000	11.30 @ 120.8	4.53	459	46	5/97
Honda CBR600F4 ('00)	94.8 @ 12,500	44.8 @ 10,000	11.61 @ 115.9	6.76	436	41	8/00
Honda CBR900RR ('98)	111.4 @ 10,000	63.7 @ 8000	10.65 @ 130.2	3.70	448	42	*6/98*
Honda CBR929RR ('00)	122.7 @ 11,000	63.9 @ 9250	10.31 @ 134.5	3.37	434	38	7/00
Honda CBR1100XX ('97)	136.7 @ 9500	80.9 @ 7500	10.20 @ 134.5		556	39	2/97
Honda GL1500 Gold Wing SE ('99)	85.0 @ 5000		13.52 @ 96.1	7.12	911	31	8/99
Honda GL1500C Valkyrie ('97)	95.9 @ 5500	96.1 @ 4000	12.13 @ 107.0		739	32	1/97
Honda RC51 ('00)	118.5 @ 9000	72.1 @ 7500	10.97 @ 128.2	4.94	489	38	8/00
Honda Shadow A.C.E. Tourer ('98)			13.91 @ 92.2		663	37	7/97
Honda ST1100 ABSII-TCS ('96)	87.0 @ 7250	72.2 @ 5250	12.40 @ 106.0		726	42	8/96
Honda Valkyrie Interstate ('99)	97.1 @ 5750	97.3 @ 4500	12.76 @ 100.8	6.38	859	31	8/99
Honda VFR800F Interceptor ('98)	97.0 @ 10,500	54.9 @ 8500	11.14 @ 122.2	5.23	515	38	8/99
Honda VTR1000F Super Hawk ('00)	100.7 @ 8250	67.0 @ 6250	11.47 @ 119.4	5.00	480	31	6/00
Kawasaki Vulcan 1500 Classic FI ('00)	54.6 @ 5000	73.6 @ 2500	14.07 @ 92.6	9.43	727	41	9/00
Kawasaki Vulcan 1500 Nomad ('99)	51.0 @ 4500	72.3 @ 2500	15.33 @ 85.8	8.27	775	34	12/98
Kawasaki W650 ('00)	44.8 @ 6750	38.4 @ 5250	14.19 @ 90.4	9.36	473	44	8/00
Kawasaki ZX-6R Ninja ('00)	96.2 @ 12,500	44.7 @ 10,250	11.38 @ 120.5	5.26	434	43	8/00
Kawasaki ZX-7R Ninja ('96)	114.5 @ 11,250	57.1 @ 9000	10.82 @ 129.7		519	39	4/96
Kawasaki ZX-9R Ninja ('00)	131.4 @ 10,500	71.7 @ 9000	10.26 @ 133.9	3.41	466	38	7/00
Kawasaki ZX-12R Ninja('00)	162.7 @ 10,000	93.7 @ 7500	9.96 @ 142.3	3.23	547	37	6/00
Moto Guzzi Sport 1100i ('97)	73.3 @ 7000	61.5 @ 5750	12.79 @ 105.5	5.20	538	39	8/97
Moto Guzzi V11 Jackal ('00)	63.2 @ 6500	59.9 @ 5250	13.74 @ 98.0	7.60	564	42	2/00
Moto Guzzi V11 Sport ('00)	80.6 @ 7750	65.0 @ 5750	12.18 @ 110.9	5.14	546	40	10/00
MV Agusta F4 Strada ('00)	114.6 @ 12,750	52.6 @ 10,250	11.09 @ 128.0	4.86	480	33	9/00
Suzuki Bandit 600S ('00)	72.9 @ 10,750	38.6 @ 9000	12.59 @ 106.8	6.76	510	40	5/00
Suzuki Bandit 1200S ('01)	101.6 @ 8250	71.8 @ 7250	11.15 @ 121.8	4.02	543	40	10/00
Suzuki GSX1300R Hayabusa ('99)	156.1 @ 9500	99.0 @ 6750	10.34 @ 140.8	2.70	550	36	6/99
Suzuki GSX-R600 ('00)	93.3 @ 11,750	44.5 @ 10,000	11.47 @ 119.9	5.41	447	39	8/00
Suzuki GSX-R750 ('00)	123.0 @ 12,500	57.7 @ 10,000	10.26 @ 135.6	4.11	426	36	7/00
Suzuki GSX-R1100 ('96)	123.4 @ 9500	75.9 @ 7000	10.50 @ 129.5		554	41	*10/97*
Suzuki TL1000S ('00)	106.1 @ 8250	69.1 @ 6500	11.15 @ 121.1	4.61	487	42	6/00
Suzuki TL1000R ('98)	121.1 @ 9000	74.9 @ 7250	10.76 @ 129.1	4.30	505	40	*10/98*
Triumph Legend TT ('00)	67.4 @ 7750	51.9 @ 4000	13.32 @ 96.7	5.87	522	33	8/00
Triumph Sprint RS ('00)	93.6 @ 9250	61.5 @ 5250	11.76 @ 110.4	4.77	512	34	6/00
Triumph Sprint ST ('99)	102.8 @ 9250	65.2 @ 5250	11.53 @ 116.3	3.83	530	45	8/99
Triumph T509 Speed Triple ('97)	83.4 @ 9000	53.5 @ 7500	11.71 @ 114.1	4.59	477	37	*8/97*
Triumph T595 Daytona ('97)	108.8 @ 9500	67.9 @ 7500	10.80 @ 126.4	3.55	490	34	10/97
Triumph Tiger ('99)	72.0 @ 8250	48.1 @ 5750	13.15 @ 101.1	6.51	550	42	12/99
Yamaha Road Star ('99)	56.8 @ 4000	88.5 @ 2250	14.44 @ 88.9		740	43	7/99
Yamaha Royal Star Tour Deluxe ('97)			14.57 @ 90.0		793	37	7/97
Yamaha Royal Star Venture ('99)	81.7 @ 6000	79.7 @ 4500	13.66 @ 93.6	8.74	890	32	8/99
Yamaha V-Max ('97)	118.2 @ 8500	84.6 @ 6000	10.87 @ 124.0		616	33	1/97
Yamaha YZF600R ('97)	88.5 @ 11,000	45.9 @ 9750	11.31 @ 118.9	4.96	485	44	5/97
Yamaha YZF-R1 ('00)	127.8 @ 10,250	72.2 @ 8500	10.29 @ 135.3	3.02	443	39	7/00
Yamaha YZF-R6 ('00)	96.4 @ 12,500	42.4 @ 10,750	11.23 @ 123.2	5.29	425	38	8/00
Victory V92C ('98)	56.0 @ 4850	74.9 @ 3300	14.28 @ 90.0		692	38	7/99

* Performance with test-session weather conditions corrected to sea-level standard conditions (59 degrees F, 29.92 in. of mercury).
**Months listed in italics are issues the motorcycle was tested in *Sport Rider*.
Test numbers used here generated by the *Motorcyclist* staff using a Dynojet 150 rear-wheel dynamometer, Intercomp SWII digital scale and Los Angeles County Raceway's quarter-mile strip utilizing a Chrondek timing system.

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KEVIN WING / COURTESY OF VREEKE & ASSOCIATES

Honda CBX 1979–1982

WITH ITS SIX CYLINDERS, SIX carbs and 24 valves, the CBX was, as *Cycle* magazine said, "a cosmic haymaker of a motorcycle." The sheer excess of the CBX took the world by surprise when it debuted in 1978 as a 1979 model.

Even though it weighed 599 pounds wet, the 1979 CBX was plenty quick. It cranked out 85 rear-wheel horsepower and made 52 foot-pounds of torque, enough to propel the big bike through the quarter-mile in 11.55 seconds at 117.49 mph. "The bike is more than fast; it is magic. The exploding glitter of its technical credentials lights up the sky," *Cycle* magazine hyperbolized in February 1978. The bike's timeless, dramatic looks and unique sound make it one of the most desirable Japanese bikes of the period.

Honda designed the bike in the 1970s, which means it uses '70s suspension and brake technology. The 1980 model featured improved suspension with a more rigid swingarm, but it also lost horsepower, as Honda detuned it to meet German horsepower limits.

The bike's timeless, dramatic looks and unique sound make it one of the most desirable Japanese bikes of the period.

A major redesign for 1981 resulted in a sport-touring version with a frame-mounted fairing and hard saddlebags, but at 680 pounds wet, it was more touring than sport. For the purist, the earlier, lighter bikes are the ones to own, especially the 1979 model. Resist the urge to modify, and look for unmolested examples.

If a bike has been well cared for, it should prove no more troublesome than any other bike of the era, but when things do go wrong, be prepared to lay out some serious cash to make them right. A clean original or restored version can bring between $4295 and $4425, while less-clean examples can go for as little as $2500. CBX owners are supported by an active club called the International CBX Owners Association (ICOA). Contact them at www.cbxclub.com. —*Darwin Holmstrom*

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